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It's all in the timing

So, the slothful period is over. The weather is becoming more amiable (or will be soon), and we're looking at our gardens, ravaged variously by the heat, drought, fires, floods and wild winds of summer, and we're setting about pruning, weeding and preparing plots for autumn. Suddenly, there's so much to do, and we actually even feel like doing it.

There's a good time and a bad time to do most things, and our gardens have a way of reminding us of this when we try to work against nature. I laid a new lawn in January, and you know that saying, "I'd rather watch grass grow"? Well, I'd rather not. Standing out there with a hose at 9pm after arriving home late on blistering days to find the lawn turned to straw and resembling a tray of Anzac biscuits that have flattened out during baking to form one giant biscuit, was definitely one of the most boring things I've done in the garden, and it proved why the time to lay lawn is now, not mid-summer.



Also in this issue, we feature a terrific kitchen garden attached to a two-hatted restaurant in rural Victoria (page 18); Phil Dudman shares more of his Lazy Sod tips (page 38); Ally Jackson goes off on a beekeeping workshop (page 32); and Sophie Thomson profiles beautiful buddleja (page 14). Finally, a note for your diary: we will be at the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show this year (March 16 to 20). Look out for our stall, and come and meet some of the team. See you there!





on Facebook at facebook.com/ ABCGardeningAustraliamagazine and Instagram @gardeningaustraliamag to keep up to date with the latest gardening news and to see some great photos.

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Fall in love with the best plants

Isn't the single most important step to a self sufficient lifestyle growing your own fruit, vegetables and flowers? We can help you grow your own vegies and the best flowers for long Australian summers.

The Diggers Club is the club for gardeners

"We'll help you to grow a beautiful garden that is stimulating and cool during the hottest of Australian summers. Create garden pictures by planting tried and proven plants that survive drought, heat waves and extreme cold," says founder Clive Blazey.

There is no excuse

for ugliness



Learn to garden

Clive Blazey explains how to create a beautiful garden that is refreshing during the hottest summers. The most comprehensive garden guide of bulbs, cottage flowers, roses and trees that thrive in drought and heatwaves. Hardcover, with 700 colour pictures.

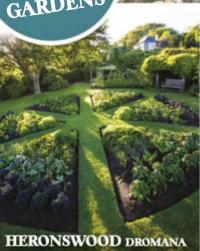
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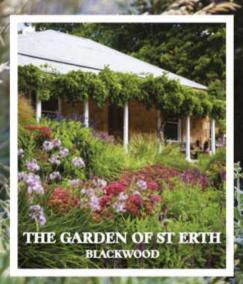
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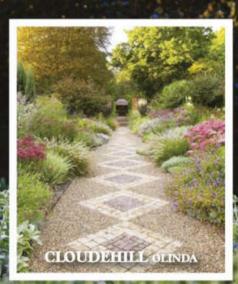
The Diggers Club is owned by the Diggers Garden and Environment Trust, working to preserve Australia's heritage of heirloom seeds and plants, and the gardens of Heronswood and St Erth.

> Diggers seeds are 100% owned and trialled in Australia, unlike UK sourced seeds sold in 70% of outlets.









All about the Diggers Club

"The Diggers Club began over 35 years ago and we are now Australia's largest garden club with more members than Australia's most popular football club, Collingwood. Imagine how more satisfying it is to spend five hours in your garden growing your own flowers and food than watching the footy! We are helping gardeners from Hobart to Cairns," says founder Clive Blazey.



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Diggers members receive 8 free packets of seeds each year and free entry to historic Heronswood, St Erth and Cloudehill in Victoria. Visit our nurseries at these

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8 magazines

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MARCH contents



in this issue

Hyacinths offer intense fragrance and colour to the spring garden, and make good indoor potted specimens. For information on buying and planting your bulbs this autumn, turn to page 24.













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what's NEW

Here are some of the latest plant and book releases, plus new products. Find them in nurseries, hardware stores or online

Celosia 'Dragon's Breath' flowers in spring and summer, then continues to add interest year round with its red foliage. The plume-like blooms stand out in the garden or in mixed containers, reaching up to 50cm high in full sun. They perform well in hot and humid conditions. ballaustralia.com

2 Available in pink and cherry, *Dianthus* 'Jolt' is a colourful performer that's heat tolerant and happy in full sun. Graced with bright flowers from spring to late summer, this hybrid of *Dianthus barbatus* does well in both pots and garden beds, and will flower without setting seed, so you are guaranteed to have no garden escapees. ballaustralia.com

A tall gardenia (*G. jasminoides*) bred in Australia, *Gardenia* 'Joy' has large, single flowers that are highly fragrant, even as they age. It blooms in warmer months (November to March). The glossy green foliage is hardy and grows quickly into a neat shrub about 1.5m tall. Feed each season. ramm.com.au

A new addition to the Bush Gems Kangaroo Paw range, *Anigozanthos* 'Bush Crystal' is an iridescent crimson-flowered variety on deep green, strappy foliage, that grows to 90cm. It flowers profusely in spring and summer, and the colour won't fade in the heat. ramm.com.au



ooks

The Inspired Landscape by Susan Cohen

Timber Press

This book's dedication should be extended from

landscape architects to landscape designers as well as gardeners. It reviews the work of 21 well-known landscape architects, mapping out the thought behind their designs. It's a source of inspiration fed by today's international landscape design.

The Art of Gardening by R Willian Thomas

Timber Press

Pore over beautiful photography and design ideas from the famous Chanticleer Garden in Pennsylvania,

US. In this gardener's garden, plant combinations sing, change regularly, and push the boundaries of expectation. Learn how to apply a little of this creativity and artistry to your own garden.

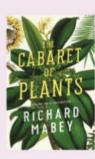


The Cabaret of Plants by Richard Mabey

Profile Books

This passionate author celebrates plants as respected individual beings, not just a decoration of Earth's landscapes, and

presents them as important contributors to our understanding of evolution, and our survival through botanically based medicines. He argues that acknowledging them may be key to preserving life itself.











- Boral Bradstone pavers create a rustic look with their textured, aged appearance, perfect for alluding to a bygone era or French Provincial style. boral.com.au/pavers
- 2 The Rover Jet blower makes yard clean-ups quick and easy as its two-stroke engine pushes high volumes of air through the tapered nozzle at 208km per hour. rover.com.au
- 3 Reduce water wastage with this Hoselink Flat Soaker Hose. Laid straight or in a gentle curve, the water seeps through the outer nylon, above or below your mulch layer. Pair it with a timer and walk away. hoselink.com.au
- 4 Wear your love of plants, and art, on your sleeve with LOQI Museum Collection reusable bags. They're fade resistant and eco friendly. until.com.au



Garden Magic by George Carter Double

Barrelled **Books**

English designer George Carter is heavily influenced by 17th-century formal garden design - with a contemporary twist. Lighting, containers and furniture all get the George Carter treatment, making his own garden amazing. This book is for readers who are looking to put their individual stamp on a structured garden.

Indoor Green: Living with *Plants* by

Bree Claffey Thames & Hudson

Interiors are being transformed by plants. As domestic spaces get smaller, more and more

plants come indoors, so take cues from modern urban examples, both nationally and overseas. Insightful tips and detailed lists of indoor plant species will set new indoor gardeners on the right path.



The Book of Leaves by Allen **I Coombes**

Ivv Press

The leaves of 600 of the world's trees are reproduced in full colour and actual size in this tree 'bible'. On each page, a map

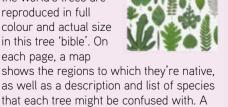




diagram of the tree shape and size next to

a human gives a clear idea of proportions.



Earth Hour 2016

This year, the Earth Hour team would like you to celebrate places you love by hosting an outdoor gathering or dinner in a favourite location. If you can't get into nature, simply turn out

your lights on March 19 from 8.30 to 9.30pm local time, to show support for a low-pollution, clean-energy future. Visit earthhour.org.au for more info or to register an event.



banana disease

A major infestation of banana bunchy top virus (BBTV) has been found on an abandoned banana plantation near Nimbin in northern New South Wales. About 7500 infected plants had been overgrown by lantana and reforested rainforest, obscuring them from aerial view. Described as the worst viral disease of bananas worldwide, bunchy top is currently confined to northern New South Wales and South East Queensland. Home gardeners have an important role to play in its control. If you suspect BBTV in your plants, send a photo to industry inspectors for advice. bunchytop.org.au

design lectures

The Garden Design Series of lectures was so popular last year that the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney is running it again in 2016. Four lectures, by locals Paul Bangay and Michael Bates, and international designers Karl Gercens and Richard Unsworth, will run over four months from March 10. Visit rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/What-s-On for details or info, or call (02) 9231 8182.





show time!

The Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show runs March 16-20. This year, the new Gardens by Twilight event, 6-9.30pm on the Friday, gives you the opportunity

to experience the display gardens and floral arrangements in the evening. This special event includes music, food and entertainment. melbflowershow.com.au

Meanwhile, landscape designer and media personality Charlie Albone (above) has been invited back to the UK's prestigious RHS Chelsea Flower Show for the second year running. Backed by Husqvarna, he is creating a garden with a busy urban couple in mind - a calm space where they can retreat. Specimen banksias (top) have been selected to star in the design, as well as a mix of other Australian natives and exotic perennials. Charlie and his team will have 19 days to construct the garden before Chelsea opens on May 24.

Bring a little Magic to your garden this summer.



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South Australia

5th-6th Tropical Cooinda Open Garden

10am-4.30pm. 34 Cooinda Cres, Athelstone. 0418 839 041. \$8. You'll feel like you're in Bali in this garden, with hibiscus, frangipani, ornamental gingers, bougainvillea and a waterfall. Unique chook house and outdoor loo. opengardensa.org.au

12th-13th Highcroft Open Garden

10am-4.30pm. 231 Mail Rd, Harrogate. 0418 839 041. \$8. Rock-walled terraces and drought-tolerant Mediterranean plants feature in this hillside garden, along with masses of wanderer butterflies and iron sculptures, opengardensa.org.au

NSW

6th Bush Tucker Gardening Workshop

9am-5pm. Level 1, 107 Redfern St, Redfern, Sydney. (02) 5300 4473. \$260. Bush tucker garden designer and grower Narelle Happ shows how to include resilient native species in your edible garden. milkwood.net/courses

12th-13th Goulburn Rose Festival

Sat 11am-5pm, Sun 10am-4pm. The Goulburn Soldiers Club. 15 Market St, Goulburn. 1800 353 646. \$5. See beautiful roses on display, an art exhibition, and spinning and weaving demonstrations. There will also be a rose and floral art competition, and plenty of plants and crafts for sale at this annual festival. goulburnrosefestival.org.au



12th-13th NSW Begonia Society's **Annual Exhibition**

Sat 10am-4pm, Sun 10am-3pm. 226 Annangrove Rd. Annangrove. (02) 9679 1386. Gold coin entry. Begonia displays, demonstrations and talks. Plants for sale and light refreshments available. begoniansw.com.au

20th Bonsai **Market Day**

10am-2pm. Auburn Community Picnic Area, Killeen Street, Auburn, 0405 808 888. Free. Scope out some new plants for your collection while helping someone downsize theirs. A great place to buy and sell your bonsai among fellow collectors. ausbonsai.com.au



Victoria.

12th-13th Heronswood Harvest Festival

9am-5pm, 105 Latrobe Pde, Dromana, (03) 5984 7900, \$10. Celebrate the harvest at beautiful Heronswood Gardens with a tour, workshops, produce stalls, heirloom tomato tasting and fun activities for the children. diggers.com.au

12th-13th Plant Collectors Sale & Garden Expo

10am-4pm. The Ferny Creek Horticultural Society, 100 Hilton Rd, Sassafras. (03) 9755 1882. \$5. Meet the growers in this relaxed garden setting, with many trees, shrubs, perennials and succulents for sale, as well as garden equipment, tools, garden art and books. Light lunch and refreshments available. fchs.org.au/events

19th-20th Country Dahlias Festival

10am-4pm. 195 Mathison Road, Winchelsea. (03) 5267 2389. \$7. Visit Australia's largest dahlia collection and see stalls, food and vintage machinery on display. Proceeds of the festival go to charity. countrydahlias.com.au

The June calendar deadline is March 3, 2016. Send the event details (date, opening times, location, cost, phone number) to Shows, Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590 or email shows@gardeningaustralia.com.au



ACT

4th-12th Enlighten 2016

See Canberra in a different light as some of Australia's most iconic institutions are lit up in this nine-night festival. Many of the city's attractions open their doors after-hours to host exclusive events and experiences, including a rare opportunity to see the courtyard gardens of Parliament House. Visit enlightencanberra.com.au and search for 'Autumn Glory tour'.

Western Australia

12th-13th Araluen's Fremantle Chilli Festival

10am-5pm. The Esplanade Reserve, Fremantle. (08) 9496 1171. \$20. Along with this year's Bollywood theme, check out chef demonstrations, food, live entertainment, kids' activities and lots of hot stuff to try, including chilli beer, chilli cocktails, chilli sauces and chilli desserts. araluenbotanicpark.com



Queensland

5th Newtown State School Fete

10am-3pm. 24 Albert Street, Newtown, Toowoomba. 0402 741 470. Free. There are plants for sale and lots more fun to be had, with rides, ring toss and Dunk the Teacher, as well as dance performances and plants for sale. You might also see a few characters from Star Wars!

12th-13th Ipswich Plant Expo

Sat 8am-4pm, Sun 8am-3pm. Ipswich Turf Club, 219 Brisbane Rd, Bundamba. 0437 110 789. \$7. Two stages with guest speakers including Costa Georgiadis, more than 100 stalls by plant sellers, plant creche, entertainment, educational kids' activities and food stalls. plantexpo.com.au

26th Feb-6th Apple & Grape Harvest **Festival Open Gardens**

Various locations and opening hours. (07) 4681 4111. \$25 for entry to all gardens over the 10 days. Ten gardens across the Granite Belt Region are open during the festival, each with their own outstanding features. appleandgrape.org

Tasmania

13th-14th Dahlia, Gladiolus & Floral Art Show

Fri 1-6pm, Sat 10am-4.30pm. Hobart Town Hall, 57-63 Macquarie St, Hobart. (03) 6247 8226. Free. As well as dahlias and gladiolus, this Hobart Horticultural Society show features floral art, bonsai, ikebana, Devonshire teas, a raffle and plants for sale. bloomingtasmania.com.au





ne of my favourite groups of plants in the garden is the genus Buddleja, sometimes known as butterfly bush. I love its attractive foliage and abundance of long, cone-shaped flower spikes, which are produced over a long period and are available in a variety of colours, including pink, purple, orange, yellow and white. The flowers are nectar-rich, with a heady, honey-sweet scent and, as their common name suggests, are a magnet for butterflies, as well as honey-eating birds.

Most varieties peak from summer to autumn, but there are winter- and spring-flowering forms, too. If you deadhead them while in bloom, you can often extend their flowering.

I have 16 varieties of these mostly evergreen shrubs at home, and they range from dwarf varieties 1m high to large shrubs which, although still young, will eventually reach 4-5m, if left unpruned. I grow them throughout our garden. positioned with taller varieties at the back of beds, and lower ones towards the front.

They combine beautifully with all sorts of flowering plants - everything from roses to salvias. Buddlejas are well suited to perennial borders and cottage-style gardens, and smaller types are great for growing in large pots. You can mass plant them to create dramatic effects, and they strike readily from cuttings in summer if you want to increase numbers.

Buddlejas are easy to grow in full sun to semi-shade. They're also remarkably tough, blooming throughout our 40°C+ summers, and tolerating our salty bore water. They come from the temperate regions of Asia, Africa and South America, and grow in a wide range of soil types, as long as

"The flowers are a magnet for butterflies, as well as honey-eating birds"

butterflies = caterpillars

If you are growing a plant that attracts butterflies, expect to see some caterpillar damage (funny, that!). It reminds me of a story I heard from a friend who works at a garden centre. A lady bought a swan plant, renowned for attracting wanderer butterflies, and in a few weeks she was back, asking for a product to kill the caterpillars that were attacking it! Rest assured, with buddlejas, the caterpillar damage is less noticeable on older plants.





they are well drained. Buddlejas grow well, and quickly, in most parts of the country except the hottest, wettest regions, and tolerate light frost (deciduous varieties are more frost tolerant). While some varieties in my garden, particularly winter- and spring-flowering types, survive on rainfall alone once established, most get a good soak every 1-2 weeks when there's no rain about. Fertilise in spring, and give them a hard prune after flowering to keep them compact. I prune them by at least two-thirds. You can even coppice them. (See our story on page 48 for more on this).



Clockwise from right B. x weyeriana 'Golden Glow'; B. lindleyana; B. crispa; B. salviifolia;

CONES OF COLOUR

B. davidii 'Pink Delight'. Previous page (main) Colourful buddleja spilling over a fence; buddleja bushes make a good backdrop for other flowers.

mu favourite varieties

Buddleja davidii cultivars are the most common varieties of buddleja available. They are all beautiful, but it's important to be aware that this species, and some cultivars, are known to be an invasive weed in certain parts of southern and eastern Australia, so you need to be responsible about growing them (see 'Weed Warning', right).

- "Ile de France' Deep-violet flowers that fade to a pale purple after a few days. * 3m > 3m
- "'Pink Delight' Densely covered with delightful mid-pink flowers. 2.5m > 1.5m
- 'Black Knight' Long spikes of deep-purple flowers. 1 2.5m 4 2.5m
- "'Nanho Blue' and 'Nanho Purple' Finer foliage and slender spikes of purplish-blue and purple flowers respectively. 2.5m > 2.5m
- 'Buzz' series Available in four colours: 'Purple', 'Sky Blue', 'Ivory' and 'Velvet' (magenta). I love this range, however the white form is my least favourite because it holds its dead, brown flower heads among the fresh ones. 1 1m - 1m

B. x weyeriana is a medium to large arching shrub that features globe-shaped bunches of flowers instead of the typical cone shape.

- 'Golden Glow' Golden yellow flowers. ^ 2.5m 2m
- 'Honeycomb' Creamy yellow blooms. 13m > 2m
- "'Moonlight' Pale yellow flowers with a flush of pink and orange throats. 1 2.5m > 2.5m

B. lindleyana is a deciduous shrub with sage-green foliage and graceful, drooping spikes of violet-coloured tubular flowers. 1 3.5m - 3.5m

weed warning

Buddlejas are great for temperate and subtropical gardens, but some (particularly *B. davidii*) have become weeds in these areas. Their seed is dispersed by wind and water, and can naturalise in bushland and disturbed areas, such as roadsides. Prune and deadhead spent flowers before seed set to eliminate this risk. Also, take buddlejas with you if you're moving - don't assume the next occupant is a responsible gardener.









B. salviifolia is also known as sagewood because of its felted, grey-green, sage-like foliage. Huge clusters of smoky-lilac, fragrant flowers appear on tips of pendant branches in late winter and spring. 3m 3m

B. asiatica 'Spring Promise' flowers in late winter and continues through spring, with very slender spikes of pure white flowers that have a strong, exquisite perfume that is reminiscent of freesias. It quickly becomes a leggy shrub and doesn't appear to be long lived, so it needs to be propagated regularly from cuttings if you want to keep it going. 3 m > 2m

B. crispa is also known as the Himalayan butterfly bush. This is a medium to large, spreading, deciduous shrub with very attractive, downy silver leaves. It produces pale lilac-pink flowers on short spikes in spring as the new foliage starts to appear. It's an incredibly tough plant – I grow it in poor soil against a hot stone wall, which faces north-west. Many other plants that I have tried growing in this spot have failed. 2-4m 2-4m



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words & photography AB BISHOP

Chefs at the popular two-hatted Royal Mail Hotel restaurant, in the small Victorian town of Dunkeld, harvest produce daily from the hotel's thriving kitchen garden, which is one of the largest of its kind in the country

unkeld could be one of the many blink-and-you'll-miss-it pastoral towns in south-western Victoria, where it sits slap-bang in the middle of flat paddocks punctuated with gnarly river red gums. However, the township, just under 300km from Melbourne at the southernmost tip of the Grampians National Park, emanates an unexpected energy for a place with a population of 480. The town is pretty, with galleries and cafes, but the jewel in its rural crown is the historic, refurbished Royal Mail Hotel.

Established in 1855, the hotel, which overlooks the impressive Mount Sturgeon and Mount Abrupt, now offers sophisticated accommodation within native gardens, a public bar and a two-hatted restaurant that attracts chefs and diners from around the world.

In 2010, with an eye towards sustainability, owners Allan and Maria Myers began developing a kitchen garden to supply the restaurant. Two years later, when horticulturist Michelle Shanahan arrived on the scene, the garden blossomed into what is now the largest restaurant kitchen garden in Australia.

"The restaurant and the garden are integral to each other," says Michelle. "Without the garden, the restaurant would be like any other. Executive chef Robin Wickens and I are equally passionate about the garden."

Eighty per cent of the restaurant's produce comes from either the 1.2ha main kitchen garden, various large beds dotted through the property, Maria's garden and citrus grove, or the hotel orchard and lettuce and flower boxes. About 120 chickens lay about 100 eggs per day at their nearby Mount Sturgeon Homestead (where there is another orchard, small vegetable garden and a snail-growing facility), and beef and lamb are raised and processed nearby.

Michelle, who has a landscaping background and organic sensibilities, uses the biointensive agricultural principle that focuses on growing a large amount of vegetables organically in a relatively small area (without allowing fallow beds), while increasing soil fertility and biodiversity. She follows a five-crop rotation system (with a green manure crop thrown in during winter) and, rather than digging vigorously, she gently aerates the soil with a broad fork before applying compost and a local pelletised fertiliser made from organic sheep-shed waste. At planting, she uses liquid seaweed and, during the growing season, plants might be top-dressed with a dose of potash, blood and bone or liquid feed.

Compost mulch plays a large part in this garden. "It feeds the soil and protects it in winter and summer, but also reduces weeds," says Michelle. "If I didn't mulch, I wouldn't have time to plant anything!" Path weeds and their seeds are dealt a fiery blow from Michelle's propane torch.

When she arrived, Michelle drew up a plan for the garden, focusing on its main challenges.

"We have a philosophy that what goes out of the garden comes back in"

"The first thing I noticed when I dug the soil was there were no worms," she says. Another issue was poor drainage due to a heavy clay-pan base, which she initially thought they'd overcome by installing drainage and raising the beds.

To invite worms, she started a three-bay, cold-composting system that supplies her with metres of rich material every three months.



growing top crops



To prevent drying out of her weekly-planted carrot seeds during germination, Michelle uses long, low teepees. These are made from chicken-wire folded over, with hessian sandwiched between the wire (left).

To control small weeds on the path of the garden, Michelle uses a propane flame torch (below).







To increase potato numbers, Michelle lengthens the growing season by growing many potatoes in bags in the field (left), and in igloos, using potting mix as the growing medium. Chefs harvest the potatoes when they're about the size of golf balls, which makes them easy to grow in bags. In the home garden, they could be grown under the eaves against the house in a warm spot.

"We have a philosophy that what goes out of the garden comes back in; including coffee grounds from our restaurant and local cafes, waste from the kitchen and chooks, and garden debris.'

Compost is turned with a tractor bucket twice a week and watered once. The soil started coming to life, but Michelle realised it needed fine tuning when broccoli and cauliflower heads didn't develop properly. Soil tests revealed waterlogging and a couple of mineral deficiencies. Working in gypsum and fertiliser solved the problems.

keeping plants healthy

Other challenges are also faced by many gardeners - cabbage moths, aphids, rodents and disagreeable weather. Growing food for home is one thing, but growing for a world-class restaurant means the pressure is on Michelle to defend her crops at all

costs. "The garden is grown for the restaurant and the chefs need to be able to pick anything they want."

Brassicas are protected with cloches Michelle designed. "They needed to be portable and light so the chefs could get under them easily to pick. We used a small-gauge wire that stops the moths, but still allows aeration and lets the water through. There have been days when I've been trying to put them on and moths were coming at me trying to get underneath! Sometimes I resort to Dipel, because one moth can cause a lot of damage."

Slugs and snails were originally a major pest so Michelle brought in Rocket the drake and a few female companions, who now spend their days foraging for their favourite food. "When the females were sitting on eggs and there was only Rocket, I noticed an increase in slugs and snails, so they really do a great job," she says.

UNDER COVER

Opposite Lemongrass, Chinese artichokes and piquillo peppers are grown in hothouses. Previous page Portable cloches cover the brassicas to protect them from pests, and pear and quince trees are covered in netting. Next page Rocket on the lookout for slugs and snails among rhubarb, thornless blackberry and jostaberry plants.



"Michelle brought in Rocket the drake and a few female companions, who now spend their days foraging for their favourite food"

Pests such as aphids and caterpillars are removed by hand or covered in diatomaceous earth. If pests get out of control, the plant is removed and burned.

Although the garden is surrounded by a 2m-high brushwood fence, it's still very exposed. Michelle protects tomatoes seedlings with large tree guards that act as mini hothouses. Espaliered fruit trees are protected from sun and possums with curtains of shadecloth, drawn across when necessary.

labour of love

Michelle grows about 700 types of vegetables, nuts, herbs and fruit - all organic and heirloom, excepting brussels sprouts and a couple of broccoli varieties. of which she believes the hybrids perform better.

"You can't beat the flavour of an heirloom tomato." picked when the sun's out. It's melt-in-the-mouth delicious," she laughs. Of the 26 varieties Michelle grows, her favourites are Rouge de Marmande and Jaune Flamme, and preferred carrots are Purple Dragon and Lobbericher. Brassica season includes five varieties of kale, including Cavolo Nero, Red Russian and Siberian, and six cabbage varieties.

Michelle uses igloos to increase the growing season for vegetables such as tomatoes and

potatoes, and to grow plants that either don't like the Dunkeld climate or appreciate cold snaps, such as edamame, Spanish licorice, Malabar spinach, sweet potato and Cape gooseberries.

Two crops adored by the chefs are wasabi and watercress, which Michelle grows together. "It's a great example of how you can grow anything if you control the environment and get the soil right," she says. "Wasabi requires 70 per cent shade and perfect drainage, and they both like constant moisture, so they're irrigated six times daily. Every part of wasabi is edible. The roots pack a punch, but the leaves are beautiful in a salad and the flowers are even more subtle."

Being the only gardener, Michelle works five days a week, but over summer she monitors the automatic irrigation system daily. The garden is watered using recycled greywater, which is filtered through a reverse osmosis system.

Michelle envisages the garden continuing to expand. "Robin has taken the restaurant to a new level and wants us to get to the stage where he doesn't have to buy any produce. Soon we'll have bees and mushrooms. There's always a lot going on and we're never bored!" GA





GLORIOUS FOOD Clockwise from





chef's paradise

Executive chef Robin Wickens (above) loves having an abundance of fresh produce in the garden. "We can make soups with zucchini flowers, which are expensive, because we have so many. When making tarragon oil, you normally might use two bunches, but we can put in eight and produce amazing flavour." Logistics can be tricky, though. Vegetables such as carrots, onions and potatoes are needed all year, so Robin is exploring ways to store carrots through winter.

Dishes change daily, depending on what's available. "People talk about seasonal cooking, but this is the next step - we are so driven by the elements. Most chefs have asparagus on the menu on the first day of spring, but we were a month into spring before we could use it!"

Produce is used within a day or two of harvesting. The chefs spend time with Michelle learning how to pick the food in a way that allows the plant to keep producing. "Chefs go out once, twice or three times a day, depending on how much they forget, which usually depends on the weather," says Robin. "If it's raining, they don't tend to forget much!"

keeping track

streamline communications between the garden and restaurant, Michelle and Robin have developed a specialised Excel program that takes the guesswork out of which food crops need to be planted, and how much fresh produce is available for the chefs to use at any given time.

The program allows Michelle to:

- input everything growing in the garden, as well as her seed suppliers, when she can sow a particular seed, the amount of seed she has in stock and their expiration dates, the method of sowing (direct, cell or tray), how long until harvest, how long the harvest will be, and any notes specific to that plant;
- see a diagram of her garden beds, including those outside the main garden, and however clicks on a garden section, she can see what is available to plant in that row. It gives her the required spacing between rows and plants for that particular plant, so she can determine how many seeds she needs to sow. If there is something already in that section, it tells her the number of days the bed will be in use. This allows her to plan ahead for what can be planted next in the crop rotation.

The program allows Robin to:

- see which produce is available in the garden and how much the chefs are able to pick, so they can order in any basics, such as carrots and potatoes, if required;
- create a 'shopping list', so they know what to pick, and where to find it in the garden.

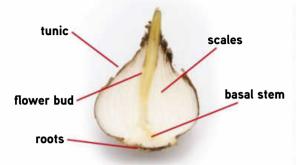








ulbs are curious things. In that odd little lump of fleshy plant tissue lies the embryo of a plant. If you cut a bulb in half vertically, you would discover the tiny nascent plant, ready to grow. But don't waste a bulb cutting it in half - we've done it for you.



When a bulb is planted, it sends out roots from its base and a shoot from its tip, which heads upwards to open as a leaf, before pushing up stems with buds. Gardeners grow ornamental bulbs for their flowers, but the bulb is growing to reproduce itself and store nutrients for growth.

Bulbs reproduce in two ways. The bulb itself develops offshoots, while the flower forms seeds. These germinate into a small plant, which, after a few years, forms a bulb, and the cycle starts again. Deadheading a bulb before it forms seeds prevents the second part of its growth plan, but assists the refuelling process and formation of offshoots.

By the time a bulb has grown leaves and flowers, it is depleted. As leaves carry out photosynthesis, the plant replenishes its store of starch and the bulb regains its size, laying down next year's growth. Water and fertilise bulbs after flowering, and allow leaves to die back, to help bulbs plump up again.

succession planting

There are bulbs that star in every season, so it's possible to enjoy a succession of bulbs, and you can conceal their dying leaves with annuals and perennials. As bulbs are planted when they are dormant, this means planning ahead.

Bulbs that flower in late winter and spring, such as daffodils and tulips, need to be planted in autumn. Most bulbs that flower in summer, including gladiolus and liliums, are planted in late winter and spring. For a show of autumn bulbs, such as naked ladies (Amaryllis belladonna) or autumn crocus (Colchicum autumnale and Sternbergia lutea). plant in late spring and early summer.

We are using the word 'bulb' in its general sense, to describe a plant that grows from an underground storage organ, so we have included corms, such as freesia, and rhizomes, such as trillium, in our suggestions of bulbs to grow in your garden.

where to grow bulbs for winter & spring

Bulbs do more than just provide a splash of colour to brighten the garden and herald the changing seasons. Some are fragrant, while many are lovely to look at in the garden, or to pick for the vase. There are varieties that colonise, while others grow happily in a container, and many traditional spring bulbs flower during winter in warm climates. Here's how to use spring-flowering bulbs.

under deciduous trees

Spring-flowering bulbs grow while other plants are bare, so they can be massed under deciduous trees. Cool climate: bluebell (Hyacinthoides hispanica and H. non-scripta), crocus (Crocus chrysanthus). daffodil (Narcissus Hybrid Cultivars), trillium (Trillium spp.), winter aconite (Eranthis hyemalis), wood anemone (Anemone blanda) Warm climate: freesia (Freesia alba), jonguil and

paperwhites (Narcissus spp. and Hybrid Cultivars)

Bulb flowers can be bold and bright, with many bred to bloom in a multitude of colours. They may be sold either as mixes or in individual colour selections for a pre-planned colour scheme. Here are bulbs to mass or splash for spring colour. Cool climate: anemone (Anemone coronaria), grape hyacinth (Muscari armeniacum), ranunculus (Ranunculus asiaticus), species gladiolus (Gladiolus communis)

Warm climate: anemone (A. coronaria), hippeastrum (Hippeastrum Hybrid

Cultivars), ranunculus (R. asiaticus), valotta (Cyrtanthus elatus)

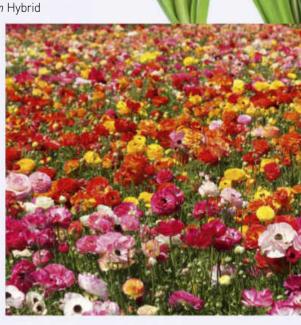
While most bulbs have flowers to pick, some look spectacular as cut flowers

Cool climate: anemone (A. coronaria), daffodil (Narcissus spp. and Hybrid Cultivars), ranunculus (R. asiaticus), tulip (Tulipa Hybrid Cultivars)

Warm climate: anemone (A. coronaria), lilium (Lilium spp. and Hybrid Cultivars), jonquil and paperwhites

MEADOW MAGIC

Right Informal planting of masses of bulbs creates a lovely meadow effect. Far right Bluebells look beautiful mass planted. Previous page Bulb varieties and colours grouped together for effect.







Warm climate: freesia (Freesia alba), green ixia (Ixia viridiflora), pineapple lily (Eucomis comosa), scarlet freesia (F. laxa)

traarance

Here are bulbs with knockout fragrances. Cool climate: hyacinth (Hyacinthus orientalis), lilv-of-the-vallev (Convallaria maialis). ionquils and narcissus (especially *Narcissus* 'Erlicheer') Warm climate: freesia (Freesia alba), jonquil and narcissus (especially N. 'Erlicheer'), tuberose (Polianthes tuberosa)

Show Stoppers While some bulbs add impact when massed together, others stand out above the crowd, literally towering above other garden plants.



FEAST OF COLOUR Left Ranunculus planted en masse is a spectacular sight. **Above** Hyacinths make quite a statement in the garden with their strong, bright, fragrant, upright flower heads.

(Narcissus spp. and Hybrid Cultivars). ranunculus (R. asiaticus), snowflake (Leucojum aestivum)

Containers

Whether you are short on space or would like a seasonal feature at the door, there are bulbs that grow well in pots. Some must be replanted each year but others grow happily year after year.

Cool climate: crocus (Crocus chrysanthus), grape hyacinth (Muscari

armeniacum), miniature daffodil (Narcissus cyclamineus and N. Hybrid Cultivars), soldier boy (Lachenalia aloides), tulip (Tulipa Hybrid Cultivars) Warm climate: amazon or eucharist lily (Eucharis x *arandiflora*), pineapple lily (*Eucomis comosa*), soldier boy (Lachenalia aloides), star flower (Ipheion uniflorum), valotta (Cyrtanthus elatus)

meadows

Wild plantings such as meadows, grown to attract pollinators and other insects, are trendy around the world. Bulbs fit well into a mixed meadow of annuals, perennials and grasses. Leave plants to die back naturally before mowing the meadow. Cool climate: camassia (Camassia leichtlinii), English bluebell (Hyacinthoides non-scripta), fairy's fishing rod (*Dierama pulcherrimum*), foxtail lilies (Eremurus spp.), fritillary (Fritillaria meleagris)



BOLD ACCENT

Left Some bulbs are perfect for pots. Massed pots of tulips make a spectacular spring garden feature. Below Alliums have purple flowers that add striking colour to the garden.

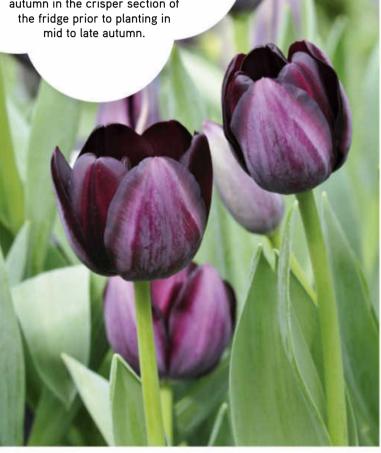
Tall bulbs take longer to reach flowering height, so expect flowers in late spring and summer. Cool climate: allium (especially Allium christophii and A. giganteum), foxtail lily (Eremurus spp.), giant Himalayan lily (Cardiocrinum giganteum), lilium (Lilium lancifolium and L. orientalis) Warm climate: crinum (Crinum asiaticum

and C. pedunculatum), gladiolus (Gladiolus Hybrid Cultivars), lilium (Lilium lancifolium and L. orientalis), sea squill (Urginea maritima), veltheimia (Veltheimia bracteata)



chill factor

As many bulbs come from climates with cold winters, they grow and bloom better in the cold. In warm areas, trick bulbs by chilling before planting. Tulips. daffodils and hyacinths benefit from spending six weeks during autumn in the crisper section of the fridge prior to planting in mid to late autumn.





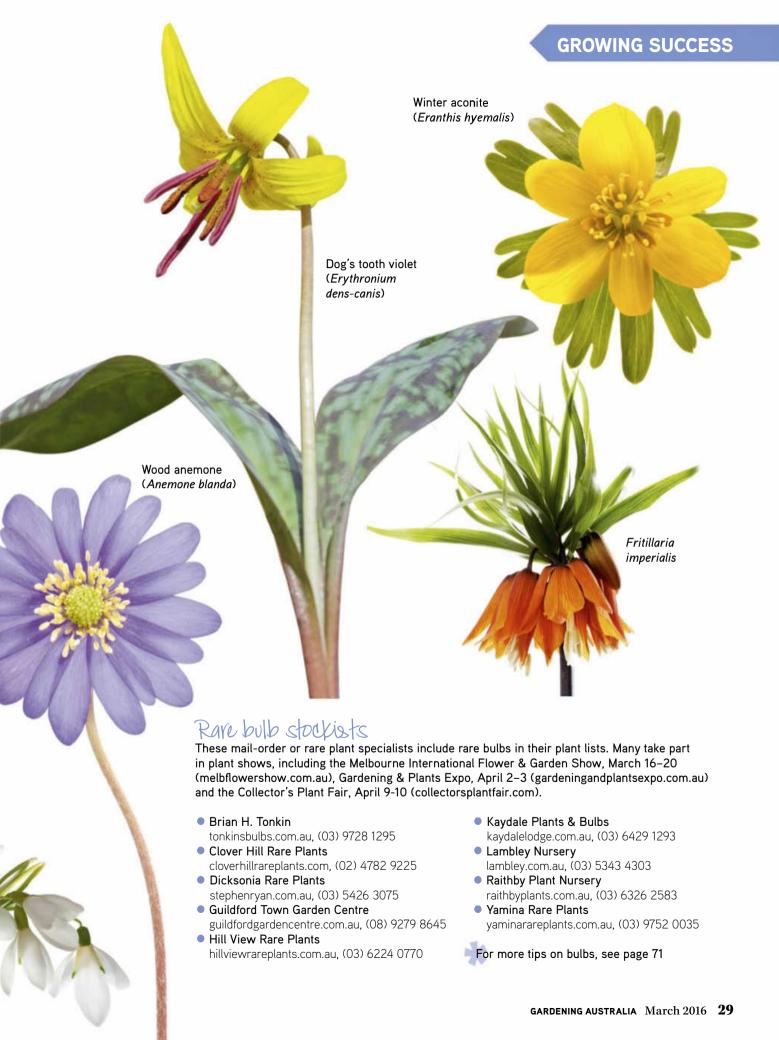
Prettu perennials After spring bulbs such as daffodils have flowered and died down, perennials can help to hide their dying leaves. Try bleeding heart (Dicentra formosa), hosta (Hosta Hybrid Cultivars), campanula (Campanula portenschlagiana, pictured left), catmint (Nepeta x fraassenii), ravenswing (Anthriscus sylvestris 'Ravenswing'), and windflower (Anemone x hybrida).



rare & collectable

As well as cheery bulbs that are regularly grown and easy to cultivate, there are many that appeal because they are rare, small or hard to grow. These can also be expensive. Among the most costly are rare named varieties of snowdrop (Galanthus nivalis), which sell for many hundreds of dollars. Some are only available as seed. Gardeners must first germinate the seed, then nurture the tiny plant until it is mature enough to form a bulb. The journey from seed to bulb can take many years. Highly desirable and collectable bulbs include: trillium; fritillary, especially the crown imperial (Fritillaria imperialis); unusual daffodils such as pink, double and split trumpet varieties, along with miniatures and Australian-bred varieties; woodland bulbs such as wood anemone (Anemone blanda); dog's tooth violet (Erythronium dens-canis); and winter aconite (Eranthis hyemalis).

Snowdrop (Galanthus nivalis)



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EASY DOES IT Clockwise from above Apis mellifera collects pollen and stores it in sacks on its hind legs; before inspecting a hive, the beekeeper blows smoke on it, causing the bees to gorge on honey and become tired and calm, and to mask the alarm pheromones; a wild beehive closely resembles the hives that are created for natural beekeeping.







re burbs

Keen to keep bees in her small, suburban backyard, ALLY JACKSON enrols in a weekend workshop to see if this gig is for her

atching a honeybee break out of its wax cell to begin its working life is one of the most mesmerising experiences I've ever had. The bee pushes the lid to its lodgings aside, wriggles out, and wobbles around on its newfound legs. I watch it shake out its wings and join its workmates, the hum of the colony filling the air. Time stands still. I reflect on the work ahead for this little bee.

The community centre is tucked behind busy McEvoy Street, and is surrounded by a garden covered in a carpet of healthy strawberry plants. Roses, dianella, gymea lilies, aquaponic water features and herbs are all part of the mix in this peaceful, thriving, inner-city garden. Two humming beehives have been shipped in from Marrickville overnight for our course, and an obvious bee flight path is already established.

"The bee pushes the lid to its lodgings aside, wriggles out, and wobbles around on its legs"

There has been bad news lately about the decline in bee numbers but, on a positive note, urban beekeeping is enjoying a widespread surge in popularity. People in cities around Australia are donning the veil, stocking their smokers with kindling, and getting back to the age-old pastime of apiculture. Whether it's to assist Apis mellifera bee populations, ramp up pollination of their plants, or produce honey, city people are really starting to connect with the idea of keeping bees in the backvard.

I'm keen to get in on the action, so I have signed up for a natural beekeeping course, to be held at the Alexandria Park Community Centre in Sydney. Natural beekeeping mimics hives found in nature, and involves minimal intervention. Tim Malfroy presents the course for Milkwood. As the son of a migratory beekeeper who has "chased the honey flow" since the '70s. Tim has lived with bees all his life, and he now has his own business.

where to start

- Check with your council about local policies.
- Join a bee club or enrol in a beekeeping workshop to learn the ropes.
- If you decide to go ahead, register your hive with your local Department of Primary Industries (DPI). This is a legal requirement, just like registering your car. You also need to notify the DPI if you sell or dispose of your hive, just like transferring car registration.
- Tell the neighbours! They may have concerns about having a hive next door, so it's good to give them a chance to ask you questions.
- Get all the appropriate gear. To begin, you need a wide-brimmed hat enclosed with netting or a 'veil', a specialised inspection tool, a smoker and gloves.



There are about 14 people attending the weekend workshop with me. The majority of my classmates have travelled far and wide - some driving several hours or flying from interstate to be here. Our bee knowledge ranges from that of the President of the Sydney Bee Club, already keeping bees in hives all over Sydney, to me, with all the best intentions but very little understanding.

duty of care

These incredible insects, that date back to dinosaurs and the evolution of the first flowering plants, work their entire four-week life cycle for the survival of their colony. The final and most public role in a bee's life is the collection of nectar and pollen. A single bee makes just half a teaspoon of honey during its entire existence - giving an idea of the multitude of other tasks a bee performs, and the tens of thousands of bees that make up a hive.

The hives favoured in this natural beekeeping course are called Warré hives, named after the French apiarist Abbé Émile Warré. Since his book Beekeeping for All was translated into English in 2007, the popularity of natural beekeeping has soared on every continent. This practice requires the beekeeper to be attuned not only to the exterior environment, but also to the health of the colony and its hive. A beekeeper needs to have the time









HIVE OF ACTIVITY

Left Comparative sizes of Apis mellifera bees (from left): queen, drone (male), worker (female). Below left The queen bee (slightly larger with less markings) is busy maintaining her colony. Below Tim Malfroy at the course, showing us the formation of the comb in a Warré hive.





"Honeybees need to be checked about three times in a season (roughly September to April)"

to observe the bee's surroundings, including plants that are flowering, the weather conditions of the season, and the bee activity at the hive entrance.

Maintaining this heightened awareness of the bee's surroundings means we also become more aware of any pesticide use by our neighbours. Pesticides invariably impinge on the success of a backyard beehive so, as stewards of the bees, beekeepers have a responsibility to raise the community's awareness of positive ways to build up, rather than threaten, bee populations.

Honeybees are not pets, nor are they a 'set and forget' pollination method for the garden. They need to be checked about three times in a season (which is roughly September to April), and your duty of care means you can't go away for long periods of time without delegating the beekeeping tasks to someone you can trust.

native bees

So, bearing all this in mind, I was contemplating where in my garden I would situate my beehive. Then Tim mentioned bee stings. No beekeeper keeps bees without the occasional sting, so a good first step may be to get tested for allergic reaction to bee venom. Of course, if you're still worried about that occasional sting, or if you or your family do test positive to an allergy, then you might want to shift your thinking towards the Australian native stingless bee.

Keeping native stingless bee hives in domestic gardens is another form of beekeeping that is fast becoming popular along the east coast of Australia. Many local councils can provide you with native beekeepers' contact details in your area, or can assist with hive acquisition. Courses are also run by Milkwood (milkwood.net) on this subject.

flow hives

The unveiling of the Flow Hive in 2015 really sent a buzz through the beekeeping community. This revolutionary design, developed by Stuart and Cedar Anderson in northern New South Wales, simplifies the collecting of honey. It's like 'honey on tap'.

The traditional and popular Langstroth hive contains 8-10 frames fitted with 'foundation' or pre-made combs made from beeswax or plastic. which beekeepers need to remove when they're harvesting honey. The Flow Hive system consists of precast frames made of BPA-free, food-grade plastic, shaped like a honeycomb matrix, with the cells set on an angle. Bees fill the cells with honey and cap them off.

To harvest honey, you turn a lever that splits the cells open and the honey drains into jars, ready for eating. Turning the lever again returns the frame to its former position, and the bees get busy refilling the empty cells. Orders for the product have poured in from all over the world.

Beekeepers have been trialling the Flow Hive frames in their Langstroth hives, and some are critical. They worry about the absence of wax, which is crucial to bees' existence - it forms their home, helps them regulate the hive temperature at a constant 35°C, and they use it to communicate with the rest of the colony. Time will tell what impact the Flow Hive has on bee populations.





SO SWEET Right Uncapping the wax lid with a hot knife. Bottom (from left) A native stingless bees' hive; when a hive reaches capacity, it can be split to create a new hive; native bees in Ally's hair.









There are about 2000 species of native Australian bees, most of which are solitary, and only 14 are stingless. Only Tetragonula carbonaria is suitable for keeping in backyard hives in New South Wales. In Queensland, the tropical species Tetragonula hockingsi is another contender.

Like Apis mellifera, Australian native bees have a preference for blue-hued flowering plants. They can be left alone to forage in an area of about half a kilometre radius from their hive, or they can be split each year, allowing you to share your hive with friends (as your contagious enthusiasm for keeping bees attracts more mates to the hobby). Their honey can be harvested but, due to the shape of the hive, it's more complicated than collecting honey from Apis mellifera, and the honey is runnier, with a more lemony flavour.

The upshot for keen beekeeping wannabes like me is that there are several options, and it's important to gather as much information as possible before you go out and get your first hive. As with gardening, you'll never stop learning once you get the bug, and it's a gorgeously sticky and tantalising subject. GA

For a list of bee-friendly plants, turn to page 71

RESOURCES

books

- Bee Friendly: A Planting Guide for European Honeybees and Australian Native Pollinators by Mark Leech rirdc.infoservices.com.au
- The Australian Native Bee Book by Tim Heard sugarbag.net
- The Buzz About Bees: Biology of a Superorganism by Jürgen Tautz springer.com

- Beekeeping for All
 by Abbé Émile Warré
 northernbeebooks.co.uk
- Honeybee Democracy by Thomas D. Seeley press.princeton.edu

online documentaries

- The Vanishing of the Bees vanishingbees.com
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he traditional way to improve soil is pretty straightforward - dig in compost, and plenty of it. Well. I'm here to say... sod that! Don't get me wrong, I've got nothing against compost. It's great stuff for your soil. It's all the effort in the method that irks me.

For starters, you've got to make the compost. That means collecting materials, piling them up, wetting them down, and then turning and turning the heap for weeks until you have a lovely fine-textured humus, just like you see in gardening magazines. When you finally have it right, you bend the back again shovelling it into the barrow, then take it over to the bed, spread it out and dig, dig, dig some more until your sad old soil looks nice and fluffy. I get exhausted just writing about it!

But there's another thing. Have you ever marvelled at the plants that grow out of an unturned compost heap? What about those tomatoes and pumpkins that suddenly appear, and why do they always grow better than the ones you actually plant and nurture! They get no attention, and they're not even growing in soil.

The medium is nothing more than semi-composted organic material, with no additional fertiliser.

This suggests a couple of interesting things to me. Compost doesn't need to be fully decomposed to be of benefit to soil, and semi-composted material can make a perfectly good growing medium on its own. Also, as the organic matter breaks down, it must be releasing nutrients to be able to sustain such beautiful growth as we've witnessed. Why waste it by leaving it to rot in a pile in the corner?

So, here are some ideas for improving your soil that cut out much of the back-breaking work, while taking advantage of the nutrition released from organic materials as they break down. They are downright lazy, but they make good sense!

"Compost doesn't need to be fully decomposed"

mobile compost cylinder

This idea takes the composting process directly to the site where you want to nourish and improve your soil - in the vegie patch or flower border, or under a fruit tree. It's simply a length of chicken wire at least 2m long formed into a cylinder and held in place with a couple of tomato pegs. Pile in your organic materials in layers, wetting them down as you go. Fill it to the top and sprinkle on a little blood and bone every few layers to encourage early interest from worms and microbes. This is a compost heap, but think of it as a potential growing medium too. You could plant some seed potatoes in the top, or tomato seedlings. If it's under a fruit tree, grow a rambling pumpkin vine. Then there's the cylinder itself, which can be used as a frame. Plant some cucumber vines, dwarf peas or sweet peas at the base of the cylinder. They will benefit from all the goodness being leached from the decomposing organic matter. After you harvest your crops, pull up the cylinder, spread the compost about and start the whole process again in another spot. No turning, no shovelling, no digging... lazy.



worm towers

If you've got a worm farm, you'll know that the worm juice and castings they provide are rich in microbes and have incredible effects on soil and plants. Worm towers are another way to harness the power of worms. These are simple, perforated plastic tubes that can be installed on location, right where soil needs a boost. The composting worms do their thing inside the buried tube - you just need to throw in some food every so often - and all the goodness of the worm activity leaches into the surrounding soil to benefit neighbouring plants. When the tube is full of castings, pull it up, grab some worms and start again in a spot nearby. The castings left behind can be gently forked into the soil, no-fuss. Now that's my kind of worm farming.







'Back to Eden' gardens

This idea, developed by American gardener Paul Gautschi (below), is based on the 'no dig' garden approach, where organic materials are piled on the ground in layers to form garden beds. No-dig gardens are great, but you need a heap of materials if you have several growing beds on the go.

'Back to Eden' gardens utilise a form of organic matter that's readily available in large volumes and delivered to your door. It's tree-loppers' mulch, and it's cheap as chips. Some tree loppers are willing to give it away (see mulchnet.com). This stuff generally contains a mix of particle sizes – chunky bits from trunks and branches, right down to finely chopped leaves and twigs, which decompose quickly. It all breaks down eventually, forming a beautiful, dark compost (far left) that would make any gardener weak at the knees.

To get started, lay several sheets of overlapping newspaper to smother grass and weeds, then build up the mulch in layers, alternating it with materials that break down fast, such as straw, lucerne and grass clippings. This provides enough humus early on to hold moisture and nutrients. Once the system's up and running, top it up from time to time with more mulch (*left*).

I've trialled this idea at my community garden and the plants grew beautifully. The mulch does a great job at conserving moisture, and you rarely have a problem with weeds. People ask, "What about the woody bits? Don't they cause 'nitrogen drawdown', robbing the soil of nutrients?" This may occur in the early stages so, if the leaves start turning yellow, throw on some fertiliser. Others have concerns with termite potential. Be sure to take the precautions you would using any woody mulch. Keep it well clear of your house and other structures,

more info

and inspect buildings and mulched areas regularly for signs of termites. If you suspect they are present, contact a pest control specialist.



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At home with Tackie



ur lives are richer when they are shared with animals - not just pets, but wild creatures we often don't really notice, much less make welcome in our gardens. In summer, I feed the fattest of our golden skinks. He's not a pet, but he is a friend, just like the possum who lives above my study is a friend - I don't play loud music when I work there, as he objects.

Lizards make wonderful companions in the garden - they not only help to clean up pests and give you the feeling that you're part of a diverse world, they can also become quite friendly.

Many lizards become used to humans fairly quickly, especially if you're willing to sit still for long periods of time with small amounts of food on your finger. Provide shelter for lizards with thick bushes, and walls and fences that prevent

Like lizards, frogs are excellent pest controllers, and you'll have the joy of their croaking at various times of the year, or before or after rain. Pesticides can be deadly for the frogs in your garden - or the ones you might have had if you hadn't used pesticides. Avoid herbicides as well. The surfactants (spreading agents in the spray) can be as deadly to frogs as the active ingredients used in its manufacture all have been implicated in the deaths of frogs.

Frogs like water. A raised pond in the form of a birdbath will suit tree frogs, while an in-ground pond is best for ground frogs. Ponds with reeds, lilies and shallow water are best for swamp frogs. A clean birdbath, suspended out of the reach of cats, is better for wild birds.

Keep your frogs safe by providing a wide range of shelter - reeds, other water plants, and trees,

"The richer your garden is in flowers, seed and fruit, the richer it will be in wildlife"

cats and dogs from reaching them, as they will eat and torment the lizards, though some dogs ignore them and some cats prefer birds to lizards (cats appear to be either bird or lizard hunters - rarely both, except in the wild).

Mulch instead of digging and weeding. Most lizards lay eggs or have favourite sheltering places, and too much digging or disturbance may damage the eggs or young lizards.

Lizards are useful pest controllers. They mostly eat insects, worms, snails, fish, tadpoles and smaller lizards, while larger lizards will eat birds and even mammals. Some eat plants or fruit, but none are totally vegetarian.

Like all animals in the food chain, they are vulnerable to poisons consumed by the animals below them. Some products are labelled as having no flow-on effects, but I am sceptical.

bushes and mulch. Most frogs have almost perfect camouflage, as long as you give them something to camouflage themselves against.

Grow lots of insect-attracting plants, too, such as salvia and grevillea, which blossom for much of the year. In fact, the best way to attract wild friends - wild birds, possums, lizards and frogs - is to grow lots of food for them. The richer your garden is in flowers, seed and fruit, the richer it will be in wildlife. We don't mind the possums eating our fruit because we grow lots of it - so much that our human friends are likely to vanish around the corner if they see us coming with yet another bag of apples!

Most importantly, think wild. What would you like if you were a wild bird, a lizard or a frog? When you welcome wildlife, your life is richer, and so is theirs - and the world's. GA





e often think of steps as purely functional items. but a well-designed and constructed set of steps can be a valuable feature in any garden. Whether you are planning to build just a few steps in a lawn, or a long flight of steps to run up a hill, a little imagination and some qualified help will result in something that not only looks beautiful but is also a pleasure to use.

ausian

Here are some key factors to consider when designing a set of garden steps:

Width is important. There is nothing worse than walking on steps that are too narrow, particularly if you want to have a chat with a friend as you walk up or down. While steps are often one of the more expensive components in the garden, spending a little more in order to get a great outcome is a worthwhile investment.

I recommend that the width of your steps should be at least 2m and, if you have a larger garden with plenty of room, then a width of 3m will provide a more appropriate scale. Keep in mind that, when steps are adjacent to an outdoor living area, they can double as seating, so being generous with their width could enhance the design and usability of your space.

Placement

While steps are usually built to connect the levels of a garden together, there is often flexibility as to their exact placement in the landscape. For example, steps can be placed to take advantage of the best views. Where the placement cannot be changed and is in a less attractive part of the garden, an artwork or feature planting placed strategically can provide a focus.

Comfort

Long sets of steps can appear daunting. so consider adding some landings along the way to break it up and, where there is room, a bench seat to sit and catch one's breath. There is a standard formula for the height and depth of risers and treads that ensures a comfortable ascent or descent (see bottom, page 47). When addressing

project checklist

- Research your options
- Identify appropriate materials that will complement the garden • Contact your state
- Develop a sketch plan and peg the location of the steps
- Develop or commission a scaled drawing, noting width, edge treatments, handrails, lighting, and step dimensions
- Nominate materials and finishes, and seek out samples or images to ensure that the

appropriate materials are used.

If using a contractor

- building authority on licensing requirements
- Ask for client references
- Provide plans, brief and specifications for quotation
- Request copies of insurance certificates and construction cards
- Inspect all work prior to making progress payments.





"Simple and subtle, but elegant and inspired should remain your aspirations"

a very large change in height over a small distance, the steps may need to run perpendicular to the slope rather than straight up, with landings placed at the switchbacks.

Steps can be potential trip hazards, so appropriate design is important, as is compliance with the Building Code of Australia (see box, opposite). Ensure that all the step risers and treads are the same height and depth. Use a minimum of two steps in any location, as single steps can be missed, thus creating a trip hazard.

Maintenance is critical. Over time, if the steps are not properly built, they may move, also causing potential for a trip hazard. If the steps become slippery, deal with this promptly. In moist, shaded areas, select materials less prone to the growth of moss and algae.

If you plan to use them at night, ensure the steps are well lit. Rather than using one large spotlight, consider using a series of smaller spotlights recessed into an adjacent wall or within planting. While addressing the issue of safety, these can also provide a feature at night. Finalise lighting locations before construction begins so that necessary recesses and access for wiring can be incorporated.

Character

Stairs always look best when they reflect the character of the home and garden. If they are located close to the house or other buildings, they may be in similar materials. You may decide to use the local rock, particularly if there are visible outcrops in the garden. Materials and finishes may also complement the theme of the garden or plantings.

Simple and subtle, but elegant and inspired should remain your aspirations. Don't overwhelm the plantings or spatial design of the garden with inappropriate steps. Sometimes all that is needed through a lawn area are some simple stone risers with wide lawn treads. Make a habit of visiting open gardens, to study how other people utilise their steps within their garden designs.

materials of finishes

Steps can be constructed from a wide range of materials. I tend to divide materials into those in contact with the ground and those elevated above it. Moisture, termite damage and corrosion are issues for materials in contact with the ground, so stone, concrete and brick are generally used. Timber and metal are more frequently used for constructing steps elevated above the ground. Take particular care with timber as it is

susceptible to rot and damage, and thus requires regular inspections - especially at the point where it contacts the ground.

Concrete steps - detailed by a designer and implemented by a landscape contractor - can be outstanding. Poorly designed and built concrete steps can be an eyesore.

Think about appropriate finishes. As a general rule, slick, polished finishes look great in an inner-city courtyard, whereas natural materials - particularly stone and timber - allowed to weather over time, tend to suit country gardens.

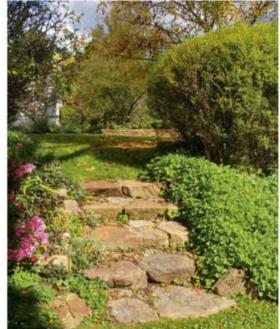
Steps do not sit in isolation and the plantings alongside provide a major contribution. Thinking of these plantings as being part of the step project can often help with plant selection, and mirroring planting on either side generally works well. I like to use strappy-leafed plants such as agapanthus, hymenocallis or clivea alongside steps. In situations where you are trying to enhance an existing set of steps, planting can transform their appearance dramatically.

call the professionals A set of steps can be a major investment,

so consider commissioning a landscape architect or designer and a recommended contractor to build them. GA







STEP RIGHT UP

From far left Timber is frequently used for stairs that are elevated above the ground. Inspect regularly as it is susceptible to rot and damage; mirroring planting on either side of the steps can be very attractive and welcoming; simple stone risers are sometimes all you need to connect one level of the garden to the next; break up wide steps with plants and handrails.

The rules

The Building Code of Australia (BCA) applies the following regulations to the construction of steps:

- There should be no less than two and no more than 18 risers without a landing
- Each tread and riser in a flight must all be the same dimensions
- Treads must be slip resistant or have a slip resistant strip on the edge
- A balustrade is required where the potential to fall is greater than 1m



calculating treads & risers

The comfortable range for treads is 240-355mm, and risers 115-190mm (with 145mm considered the optimum height for less agile people). Professionals use a formula to work out suitable tread and riser dimensions: 2 risers + 1 tread = 550-700mm. If your calculation totals between 550 and 700mm, then your steps will be comfortable to ascend or descend.

tread

240-355mm











ven without knowing what they mean, the words 'coppicing' and 'pollarding' have a lovely romantic, olde-worlde ring to them. They didn't start out as horticultural terms. These words had their beginning in ancient forest management, agriculture and processes such as charcoal production. We gardeners have appropriated the processes for our own aesthetic purposes (if only to a very small extent in Australia), and have adopted the terms as well.

As Aussies, we're in the habit of letting things grow as they wish, and are likely to consider any sort of tree shaping or regular hard pruning as some kind of arboreal torture, or the work of a serious control freak. So, very few of us consider the practice of coppicing, which involves cutting a shrub or tree right back to stumps. However, there are good reasons for adopting this extreme form of pruning.

"The best way of maintaining the dominance of young wood is to coppice it"

Some shrubs or trees have attractively coloured new shoots, with the colour carried by the young foliage or stems. Perhaps the most widely recognised example is the red-stemmed dogwood (Cornus alba). The young shoots are lipstick-red, and the best way of maintaining the dominance of young wood is to coppice it, by which we mean to cut the whole shrub down to ground level every couple of years. The same goes for the much rarer yellow-stemmed dogwood (Cornus sericea 'Flaviramea').

There are some other shrubs and trees, such as the powton (Paulownia spp.), that shoot back from severe wounding with uncharacteristically large or showy leaves, and it's worth cutting these back to stumps each year to induce them. Many of our own eucalypts have very beautiful juvenile foliage, being either Quality, reliable performance and incredible colour range!



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TRUE COLOURS

Clockwise from bottom **left** Coppice woodland, showing a characteristic carpet of shade-tolerant plants; a tight cluster of pollarded willows; red-stemmed dogwood (forms of *Cornus alba*); Buddleja davidii is better for regular winter coppicing; pollarded willows woven together with off-cuts.

Previous page Roadside pollarded willows, typical of many rural areas of Europe.

"Pollarding is a very similar technique, but it involves cutting back to a permanent trunk"

extraordinary or attractive in shape, or suffused with plum or striking glaucous-grey. They can be maintained in a perpetual juvenile state by cutting them hard every year or two, which has the side-benefit of keeping them permanently shrub-sized. You're much more likely to see our gums treated this way in the UK than in Australia, as the frost-tenderness of many species forces gardeners to consider other means of managing them.

The lovely old butterfly bush (Buddleja davidii) is often most appealing when it's coppiced every year. Flowering is slightly delayed, but flower heads are much larger as a consequence and, instead of them arising on a twiggy, angular shrub, each flower-head sits atop a long, graceful, unbranched cane.

Pollarding is a very similar technique to coppicing, but it involves cutting back to a permanent trunk, rather than to the ground. This has mostly been used in the past when collecting fodder for livestock. We are in the habit of thinking of sheep and cows as primarily grass feeders but, in many times and places where the amount of available grass was limited by drought or farm sizes or seasonal considerations, the stock has been fed on pollarded fodder, either fresh or dried. Horticulturally, pollarding is primarily used to keep city street trees at a predetermined height but, despite being done for

practical reasons, the practice has aesthetic consequences. Regularly pollarded trees develop a typically arthritic, knuckly appearance, which can be curiously appealing.

While most species of willow are considered weeds here in Australia, they're often spotted on roadsides in rural Europe, where they are regularly pollarded. This is often carried out for the purpose of either height control or damage minimisation (a smaller tree is less prone to wind and snow damage). In gardens, the same practice is adopted to induce the coloured growth that many willows carry, with stems of either yellow, orange, red or black with a glaucous bloom arising like a great shaving brush from a thick, old trunk.

Golden foliage is often at its most striking when young, and several gold-leafed shrubs or trees, such as the gold-leafed catalpa (Catalpa bignonioides 'Aurea') or the gold-leafed elder (Sambucus nigra 'Aurea') are maintained at their most showy if pollarded while leafless each winter.

Both coppicing and pollarding have depended upon, and developed out of, the remarkable ability most trees have to shoot back after damage. In that sense, we're really just manipulating nature's natural processes to our advantage. Which, when it comes right down to it, is what gardening is all about. GA



reat southern

Where do you start when your garden is more like a beach than a patch of dirt? KATHY BAFILE gives us the scoop

estern Australia is well known for its spectacular beaches with crisp, white sand, but when that same sand forms the basis of the so-called 'soil' in the garden, it's not quite so enticing. While I admit to being jealous of the rich, brown loam that I see in other states, I love the fact that I can fill my garden with some truly beautiful indigenous plants thanks to such well-draining soil here on the coastal plains, so it's not all bad. With a bit of effort I can still grow vegies, herbs and some wonderful ornamentals, too.

the science of sand

There are two main problems with sandy soil. Firstly, in many cases, water doesn't even get through the top layer, no matter how much water you apply and secondly, if it does penetrate, it usually drains straight through as if someone has pulled the plug out of the garden bed. To explain and solve both of these issues. I'm going to attempt a bit of 'kitchen-sink science'.

Let's start with the drainage problem. Sand is an important part of any soil as it assists with drainage but, when a soil is mostly sand, it drains too freely because there is nothing to slow the water flow down.

Picture sandy soil like a tall glass full of marbles. Like sand, marbles are hard and smooth and, if all the marbles are the same size (much like sand particles), then the spaces between them will be a regular size. too. Any water poured from the top would drain to the bottom very quickly, because it has an easy path.

Most plants prefer a soil that can hold some moisture so, to enable that, it needs to have a range of particle shapes and sizes that create both big and small spaces. Water settles in the smaller spaces. and the larger spaces provide free drainage and air around plant roots, which are both equally important. Plants send their roots through the large spaces. while their tiny feeder roots head into the small water-filled pockets which hold valuable nutrients.

The trick to slowing down the water flow and capturing some of it is to mix up the particle shapes and sizes - thus creating a range of pocket sizes between the particles - and to add some porous material. With marbles, it would mean throwing in a few peewees and tombolas as well as a few pebbles and sticks, along with a bit of spongy material.

When it comes to sandy soil, the solution is to dig in copious amounts of organic matter in many forms, including compost, animal manure and straw. Get into the habit of filling at least two-thirds of every new planting hole with a range of organic materials. That way, you will be introducing a mix of particle shapes and sizes to adjust the spaces between sand granules. Organic matter also acts like a sponge, soaking up and retaining moisture.

One thing that sandy soil gardeners really crave is clay. Clay is made up of miniscule granules of minerals that hold moisture exceptionally well - often too well when it's on its own - but when you mix it with sand and organic matter, you create that





essential combination of small and large spaces, resulting in a well-drained soil with an excellent ability to hold moisture. There are now sandy soil additives, available in shops, which contain clay and other natural minerals to ensure that the water and nutrients remain in the root zone. These are easily mixed through the top 10cm of soil, or even spread over existing lawns before being watered in.

breaking down the barrier

So what about the other sandy soil problem where even copious watering barely penetrates? It's as if someone has placed a layer of plastic wrap over the surface, which is actually not far from the truth.

When organic matter breaks down - particularly material derived from plants with a high oil content, such as eucalypts - it forms a waxy coating on the grains of sand. This acts like an invisible barrier across the soil surface, causing water to run off instead of seeping into the soil.

"Get into the habit of filling at least two-thirds of every new planting hole with a range of organic materials"

In the kitchen, you would use a surfactant, such as dishwashing liquid, to break down oils. In the garden, the solution is similar. Specialised wetting agents break down the waxy coating and allow water to penetrate the pores and spaces between soil particles. There are many wetting agents available - organically certified products are readily biodegradable. You may need to apply a wetting agent to sandy soil several times a year, particularly after an extended dry period.

Turn over for plants that love sand.

Hard Gardening

Six plants for sandy soil

Red-hot poker 'Fire Glow' (Kniphofia 'Fire Glow')

Small, clumping perennial featuring large red/orange bottlebrush flowers on tall stems

- ↑30cm
- drought tolerant
- **⇔** 35cm
- late summer to autumn
- 🏶 full sun perennial
- **Shore juniper** (Juniperus conferta) Hardy, prostrate conifer that forms a dense mat of green, prickly foliage
- ↑30cm
- perennial
- <→ 2m
- drought tolerant
- 🏶 full sun
- w non-flowering
- Echium fastuosum 'Duxfield Blue' Shrub-like perennial with handsome grey leaves and purple/blue flower spikes
- **↑**1m
- drought tolerant
- <⇒ 50cm
- 🏅 perennial
- 🌉 full sun
- spring
- French lavender (Lavendula dentata) Evergreen shrub with soft grey foliage and fragrant lavender blooms
- 1m

suitable for pots

- <→ 1m
- **k**perennial
- 🌞 full sun
- year round
- drought tolerant
- Pelargonium zonale 'Emotion' Compact perennial with dark green leaves and semi-double magenta blooms
- ↑ 50cm
- 🖔 suitable for pots
- <⇒ 50cm
- 🟅 perennial
- 🌋 🌁 sun/semi-shade 🏻 💇 year round
- 🦄 drought tolerant
- Laurustinus (Viburnum tinus) Shrub with dense, deep green foliage and small, fragrant white to pink flowers
- ↑3m
- drought tolerant
- <→ 2m
- 🏅 perennial
- 🌞 full sun
- winter to spring





























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here was a paddock near my school bus stop when I was a boy, and for a good part of the year it was chock a block with crops of that vegetable that Mark Twain once described as "cabbage with a college education": cauliflower. When the crop was ready, I thought it looked a bit like tiny clouds resting among the leaves. It is only when you get up close to this aristocrat of the Brassica tribe that you can appreciate the statement this

plant makes. Like many of its cousins, it's a large plant with an impressive spread, but it's the delicately beautiful flower head or curd that sets this apart.

getting started

In any groupings of plants there is always one that seems to constantly challenge your ambitions as a gardener, and cauliflower (Brassica oleracea (Botrytis Group)) is definitely one of these. Don't get me wrong, as a plant it is relatively

easy to grow, as it tends to be vigorous. but growing and harvesting that prize curd can be a different story if you're not paying close attention to its needs.

Let's start at the beginning. Cauliflowers like cool temperatures, so March to April is a good time to get seeds started in most areas. You can sow as early as February in cool zones, but in the tropics it's best to hold off until April or May.

I have grown many cauliflower crops from both seed and seedlings, and I have

to admit, this is one of the few crops that I prefer to grow from seedlings, because it saves me time and there is normally a good selection of varieties available at my local nursery. If you want to grow from seed, sow them in trays undercover first, and establish seedlings before planting out. If you stagger your sowing over a couple of months, or plant a few different varieties with differing maturation times, you can extend your harvest period.

Condition your soil for cauliflower the same way you would for other brassicas. Start by giving the bed a good dig over, then apply some lime, and fork it in - a handful every square metre should do the trick. Then go inside and enjoy a cup of tea because your work for the day is done.

Go out a week later and be prepared to dose up your soil with lots of compost or well-rotted animal manure. I like to use a big bucketload or two per square metre, then spread out a dusting of blood and bone at the rate of one handful per square metre. Grab your fork and lightly cultivate the soil until everything is nicely mixed through. Now you are ready for planting.

Selecting the best seedlings to put in will give you a great head start. You don't want to plant them too young and soft - wait until their first true leaves have fully developed. They shouldn't be lanky either, but if you've left them in their punnets too long (it happens), you could try planting them a bit deeper so that their stems are fully covered.

care & harvesting

Like the rest of their tribe, cauliflowers have large appetites and convert the food you give them into a lot of verdant growth. However, there is a fine line between satiating their appetites and over-feeding them, which will just cause leaf growth at the expense of the curd. A little bit often is the key. Keep plants well-watered and apply a solution of liquid seaweed and fish emulsion mixed at half strength once a week. About six weeks after planting, sprinkle around a little more blood and bone, but don't overdo it.

Be patient. It can take cauliflowers up to three months for their little white curds to make an appearance, and when they finally do, be prepared to give them some protection. In cold climates, they are easily damaged by frost, and in warm areas they are prone to yellowing and bolting. You can throw an old bit of material over the curd to protect it, but the best way is the simplest. Grab a short length of twine, pull some leaves over the curd and tie them in place.

Once the curd has developed to a tight, well-formed head, harvest it and enjoy. Use a knife to cut it off a fair way down the stem. Unlike broccoli, most cauliflowers don't produce any reliable side shoots, so pull up the plant after harvest. It's a one-curd crop, I'm afraid, which just makes that prize even more special. GA



All vear rounder variety because it is a solid performer producing dense. medium-sized, pure white curds. Purple Sicily Heirloom variety producing one funky-looking head. Easy to grow and holds its curd well. Good for first-time growers. Snow queen One of my favourites, not just because of the impressive size of the head, but because it's just so good with cheese.

"Like many of its cousins, it's a large plant with an impressive spread"



troubleshooting

This noble vegetable has attracted its fair share of enemies, from moths, butterflies and gastropods to spots, rots, mildews and moulds. Most of the disease problems only occur in the odd season, and many are easily prevented when you give plants the optimum conditions for healthy growth. Common pests may still appear, but are easily managed. Infestations of grey aphids can be cleared up with a couple of applications of pyrethrum, and slugs and snails can be collected at dusk. Then there's the cabbage moth, whose larvae are a treat for chooks - the full-grown specimens have me running around like a child with my butterfly net.

Relp me if you can

How exactly do seaweed products help your vegie growing? NOEL BURDETTE explains what seaweed can and can't do



eaweed extract has been on the home gardener's list of 'must have' products for many years. It is talked about at garden events, and recommended by high profile garden personalities time and time again. To many people, it must seem like the answer to all our gardening problems!

There's no doubting the many benefits of using seaweed products, but they are not all-in-one cures for every garden or plant ailment. They are not a complete fertiliser, either. While they contain valuable stores of potassium and trace elements, they have little nitrogen and phosphorus, and should be used in conjunction with regular fertilisers for best results. Seaweed products are primarily soil and plant conditioners and, when used regularly, will help you grow healthier, more productive vegetables.

wonder of the sea

As they grow, seaweed plants absorb the full spectrum of trace elements that have leached from the land and dissolved in the oceans. These valuable micronutrients are retained in the seaweed products we buy, found in a chelated form which is readily absorbed by plants.

Seaweed also contains alginic acid, a wonderful soil conditioner which works in two ways. Firstly, it combines with other soil elements to form a polymer which is very good at absorbing water, improving the moisture-holding capacity of the soil. It also binds soil particles, helping to create a 'crumb-like' structure in the soil, which improves air and water penetration. This stimulates healthy root growth and creates conditions that support beneficial soil bacteria which maintain soil health.

Other key elements found in seaweed include auxins and gibberellins (growth hormones). These 'biostimulants' or plant conditioners have been found to increase cell growth (particularly in roots), thicken cell walls and assist cell metabolism. which leads to greater plant growth and higher yields. Their remarkable ability to promote root development reduces



how to apply

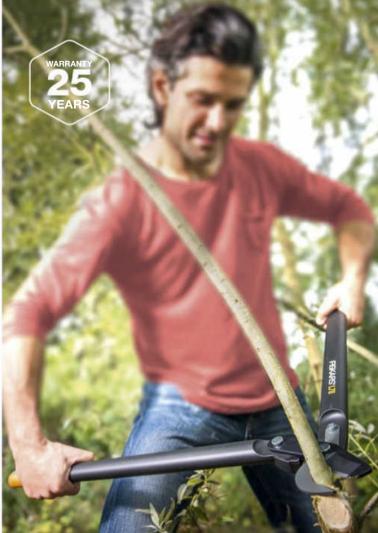
Seaweed products are available in either liquid or powdered forms, both of which are diluted before use. The solution can be applied directly as a soil drench. If the soil is dry, you can add a soil wetting product to increase its absorption. Some gardeners soak water crystals in liquid seaweed, then throw some into the hole when planting vegetable seedlings to assist them in establishment.

The plant conditioning benefits of seaweed extracts can also be absorbed through foliar applications, and it's a very efficient and cost-effective way to use your products. Just mix it up according to directions, put it in an atomiser or sprayer and apply to the foliage.

The key to gaining maximum benefit from your seaweed product is to apply it at least once a fortnight for established plants, and weekly for seedlings. Put a reminder in your diary! GA

benefits of seaweed

- improved soil health
- enhanced root development
- greater plant vigour
- quicker plant establishment
- reduced transplant shock
- increased pest and disease resistance
- better drought and cold resistance
- higher crop yields







www.fiskars.com.au

cooking with... macadamias

This nutritious, native nut elevates everyday foods, both sweet and savoury, to something a little bit special



macadamia lamb with 'orange' chips

600g kumara, peeled ½ cup macadamia nuts 8 x 75g lean lamb leg steaks cooking-oil spray

Preheat oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper. Chop kumara into batons or wedges and place on tray, spray with oil and bake for 25 minutes. or until golden and tender.

Place macadamias into a food processor and blend until very finely chopped. Sprinkle one side of each lamb steak with nuts and press to secure. Season with freshly ground black pepper. 200g sugar snap peas, trimmed 200g snow peas, trimmed 1 cup frozen peas 50g baby spinach leaves

Spray a large frying pan with oil and place over medium-high heat. Cook lamb steaks for 7-8 minutes, turning halfway through cooking, or until cooked to your liking.

Meanwhile, steam all three types of peas until tender. Add spinach leaves and toss gently to combine. until wilted. Serve pea mixture with lamb steaks and 'orange' chips.













toasted muesli

2 cups rolled oats 1 ½ cups bran cereal 2 tablespoons sunflower seeds 1 ½ tablespoons pumpkin seeds 3 tablespoons shredded coconut 1 tablespoon flaked almonds 1/3 cup dried apricot, diced ¼ cup dried apple, diced 1/3 cup sultanas 2 tablespoons macadamia nuts, roughly chopped

Preheat oven to 150°C. Combine oats, bran, seeds, coconut and almonds in a bowl. Spread mixture onto a baking tray and bake for 5 minutes.

♠ Add apricot and apple to tray, and $m{\omega}$ bake for a further 10 minutes.

• Stir through the sultanas and macadamias, and allow mixture to cool. Store in an airtight container.

grilled chicken & macadamia pesto

serves 4

½ cup firmly packed fresh basil leaves ½ cup firmly packed fresh parsley leaves 1/4 cup grated parmesan 1/4 cup raw macadamia nuts 1 clove garlic, crushed 1 tablespoon olive oil

4 x 150g chicken breast fillets

Place basil, parsley, parmesan, macadamia nuts and garlic into a food processor. Blend until chopped.

Mith motor running, gradually add oil and process until smooth. Add 3-4 tablespoons warm water to reach a fairly smooth consistency. Season with freshly ground black pepper.

 Heat a chargrill pan or barbecue to medium high. Spray chicken with

cooking-oil spray 2 tablespoons lemon juice 600g potatoes, peeled, cut into 1cm slices

4 cups chargrilled vegetables, such as sliced red capsicum, eggplant, mushrooms, asparagus and zucchini, to serve

oil and cook for 5 minutes on each side, or until cooked through, sprinkling with lemon juice as the chicken cooks.

Meanwhile, steam potato slices for 5 minutes in the microwave, or until cooked.

Slice chicken and serve stacked on top of potato. Spoon pesto over chicken and potato. Serve with chargrilled vegetables.



These recipes come from previous issues of *Healthy Food Guide*, and are developed in consultation with a dietitian. healthyfoodguide.com.au

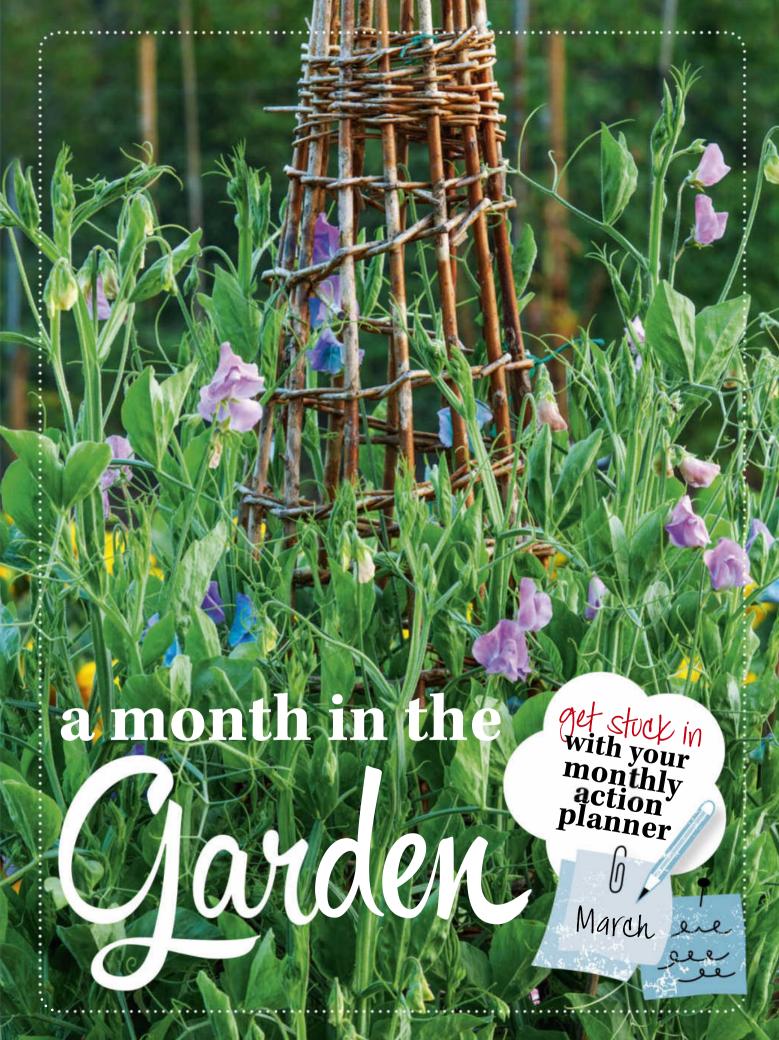
Pick me now



- Apple Pick a few that have reached full colour and cut them open. If the seeds are brown, they are ready - if they are tan, leave them a little longer. Destroy grub-infested fruit by cooking in a sealed black plastic bag in the sun for a few days before composting.
- Capsicum Green fruit can be picked as soon as they have reached full size but, for the sweetest flavour, wait for them to colour up. Use sharp secateurs to snip the fruit from the bush. Cover plants with shadecloth on hot days to avoid sunburn damage.
- Pineapple This fruit is incredibly sweet when allowed to completely ripen on the plant. Wait for the fruit to turn a golden vellow and emit a sweet aroma. Keep an eye out for hungry vermin; protect ripening fruit with a loose wrap of chicken wire.

also in season

- avocado banana beetroot
- cucumber eggplant fig
- ginger grape guava
- kiwifruit lettuce lime
- nashi onion pawpaw
- pear pomegranate potato
- pumpkin quince radish
- rhubarb silverbeet tomato watermelon • zucchini



your planner

harvest & store apples

Apples are coming to an end in March and April, with late-season varieties such as Golden Delicious, Red Delicious, Fuji, Sundowner, Pink Lady and Granny Smith ready to harvest now. Heritage apples are also finishing up soon, with Bramley's Seedling, Blenheim Orange and Geeveston Fanny ready to harvest this month. Apples can last several months if stored correctly. Try to get your hands on old apple boxes, where each apple sits in its own cardboard compartment, to reduce the likelihood of spoiling. Store them in a place that's cool, dark and dry (but not freezing, as this ruins the crop). Store different varieties separately as they ripen at different rates, and check weekly for signs of over-ripening. Most importantly, don't wait too long before eating ripe apples - they are always best when eaten fresh from the tree. For more about growing heritage apples, see the April issue

top job

plant sweet peas

weet peas (Lathyrus odoratus, left) are one of the stand-out fragrant flowers of spring, and it's traditional to plant them on March 17, St Patrick's Day. If you live in an area north of Sydney or Perth, you may find it's still too warm in March, but don't worry, you can hold off until April.

Prepare soil by digging in lots of compost. Avoid fertilisers at the expense of flowers. Plant sweet peas in full sun against a trellis or climbing frame that will support developing shoots. are available. These stop at about 30cm, making them ideal for pots, hanging baskets and small spaces.

encourage germination. Scarifying the seed with sandpaper 1cm deep and 25cm apart. Water at planting, then again once seedlings emerge. Protect developing seedlings from snails and slugs with a saucer of beer or pet-friendly snail pellets.

Available in shades of white, blue, purple, pink and red, sweet peas are a beautiful and highly fragrant addition to the

did you know?

Princess Mary used sweet peas to decorate the church and reception at her wedding to Frederik, Crown Prince of Denmark





IT'S TIME TO...

- **Take** cuttings from native groundcovers such as scaevola and brachyscome
- Deadhead all your summer-flowering plants, including roses
- Apply a sprinkling of organic fertiliser to your lawn and water in well
- Fertilise maidenhair ferns with fish emulsion mixed at half strength
- **Start planting** flowering annuals for winter spring colour
- Trim and fertilise shabby geraniums to encourage quick regrowth
- **Cut** bunches of dahlias to display indoors and share with friends
- Collect seed of spent summer flowers that you want to keep



your planner



EDIBLE GARDEN

- **Prepare** beds by removing the last of the warm-season crops and enriching the soil with compost and aged manure
- Plant cool-season crops such as broad beans, broccoli, kale, swede and brussels sprouts towards the end of the month
- 📕 Apply liquid seaweed to all
- your vegetable beds

- Sow lettuce, mizuna, rocket and spring onion for salads
- Treat citrus for scale by spraying thoroughly with horticultural oil
- Harvest quince, raspberries, medlars, crabapples and figs
- Start your winter herb garden by sowing seed of coriander (left), oregano and tarragon
- Save excess crops by blanching, then freezing or bottling
- **Harvest** and store potatoes - you can tell they're ready when plants die down
- Allow annual herbs to flower before removing them as they provide extra feed for bees

and puckered damage on citrus leaves. It's common this time of year, and largely cosmetic. Prune off the worst-affected growth.



top job

love your lawn

utumn is lawn time. It's time to renovate, rejuvenate and establish new lawns. Take a moment to evaluate your lawn. If it is uneven, spread some topdressing mix and level it out with a steel rake or lawn leveller (available from hire companies). Don't go more than about 1cm deep, as the grass below will suffocate. For deep depressions, apply another layer of topdressing mix when the grass grows through, or dig up the grass in squares and spread the mix underneath. Sow bare patches with lawn seed and cover lightly with soil.

New lawns can be sown or laid now. Prepare soil to a fine tilth, incorporating a slow-release fertiliser. It is crucial to establish an even base, so the developing lawn will be level. Select a lawn to suit your situation and needs. In high-use areas with full sun, Kikuyu is a great choice, but in shade, Buffalo grass is more resilient. If you hate mowing, look at Zoysia or Palmetto, which are low maintenance and slow growing. There are also seed mixes available that include varieties that germinate quickly to prevent weeds developing, while giving the lawn species you really want time to establish.

New lawns need regular applications of water. With seed, a light misting several times a day until germination is critical, while freshly laid turf needs a good soak daily until the roots find their way into the soil below, followed by regular watering for the first few months in dry conditions. Once established, watering can be greatly reduced or stopped altogether.

Keep your mower set high for the first few cuts, gradually returning to your regular mowing height after 3-4 months. This allows a strong, drought-tolerant root system to develop.

Some plants have a mind of their own and need some early guidance to keep them on the straight and narrow. Grevillea is one of those plants that tend to fall over and grow diagonally, if you let them do their own thing. The way to encourage a nice, vertical trunk is to stake them now.

Ally Jackson







- 1. Drive 2 timber stakes firmly into the ground opposite one another. Place each one about 15-20cm from the trunk (if your tree-to-be is in an exposed and windy spot, up the ante and add a 3rd stake).
- 2. Using cotton ties, budding tape or pantyhose, loop around the trunk, stake in a figure-eight and secure the ends. Don't make the loop too tight or it may girdle the tree as it grows.
- 3. Do the same on the remaining stake(s). Again, not too tight - allow some room for the plant to move. That way it will be forced to develop a strong root system that will support the tree in the long term. Remove the stakes after 12 months or so.

sow of plant ...

IN MARCH

Asian greens bean broccoli/cauli brussels sprouts cabbage carrot celery/celeriac coriander cucumber kale leek lettuce potato silverbeet spring onion swede sweetcorn tomato turnip



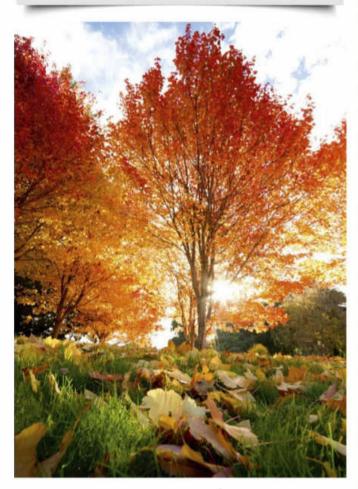


subtropical arid/semi-arid warm temperate cold temperate



DO IT NOW

- Re-pot indoor plants if needed, and wipe foliage with a damp cloth to remove dust
- **Wait** until vines start to die and fruit stems go brown before harvesting pumpkins
- Fill pots with seedlings of pansies and primulas
- Apply a slow-release fertiliser and composted manures to garden beds
- **Bring** cymbidium orchids out of the shade but protect from direct sun in hot weather
- Tidy the garden by cutting back remaining summer-flowering shrubs and perennials



visit autumn gardens Autumn may be here, but the true impact of the cooler weather

won't be felt for several weeks. Plan to visit open gardens over the coming months so you can take note of the best autumn colour in your area. Seeing colours and plants in other people's gardens is the best way to choose the most suitable plants for your garden. Check online for open gardens in your state.





divide Kangaroo paws

One great thing about kangaroo paws (Anigozanthus spp.) is that they multiply. Over time, they form large clumps, which should be divided and replanted, giving you a bigger, better display next season. ANGUS STEWART shows how.

1. Work your way around the clump, to loosen it, then lift. I prefer to use a fork, as I sever less roots that way, and it requires less effort,

but have a spade handy in case it's a really big clump. 2. Shake off excess soil, load into a barrow and place on a bench at a comfortable height.



your planner













- 3. Cut back the foliage by up to half to reduce water loss from the new plants, and to help direct their energy to root rejuvenation.
- 4. Once all leaves are trimmed, you are ready to divide.
- 5. Large clumps may call for drastic measures - here's where a tomahawk is handy. For a small clump, a knife will suffice. Divide into clumps with several shoots in each division.
- 6. Remove dead leaves and rhizomes, so you are left with only healthy, green tissue.
- 7. Once you get down to smaller clumps, you can generally divide them by hand.
- 8. Plant into pots filled with any free-draining potting mix. Make sure each plant sits at the same height as it was in the soil.
- 9. Once the plants start to produce new leaf growth or roots grow out the bottom of the pot, it's ready to move them to a garden bed or bigger pots.



planting native nectar-producing trees and shrubs, such areas of dense cover so smaller birds feel safe, otherwise larger birds will dominate your garden and they are far less likely to eat those insects that you're trying to eradicate. A combination of groundcovers,













top job

plant spring bulbs

Now is the time to get ready for planting bulbs, to provide the garden with a welcome splash of colour in spring. Bulbs are easy to grow - just follow these simple steps.

- Order your spring bulbs now for planting Lduring autumn. Some bulbs, such as tulips and hyacinths, need to be kept in the crisper section of the fridge for six weeks prior to planting, so order these now to avoid disappointment.
- Choose spots in your garden that receive Ifull sun. Mass plant for maximum impact and to allow the surrounding bulbs to support each other. Try to position them somewhere where you can readily enjoy their showy flowers and delicate perfume.
- Dig a hole three times as deep as the bulb itself. Position the pointy end upward, and the roots downward. The only exception to this are ranunculi and anemones, as they are corms and should have the pointy ends facing downward. If in doubt, plant them on their side and let them decide.
- Fertilise after planting and again when flowering has finished. Leave the foliage to brown off completely before removing, as the bulbs reclaim nutrients from their leaves for the following year's display.
- Water regularly throughout spring and summer, especially on hot, dry days. Protect from snails, slugs and strong wind.

See our story on bulbs on page 24



IN THE TROPICS

- Mulch and fertilise around plants to replace nutrients lost during heavy rains
- **Weed** now as a priority, and keep this up to prevent the further spread of seed
- Propagate blue ginger using stem and tip cuttings. Lay the cuttings flat on a seedling tree and keep them warm over the coming months
- **Plant** tomato, capsicum and zucchini now, as well as root crops such as carrot and potato
- **Raise** the mowing height to 5cm to improve lawn performance
- **Harvest** tropical fruits including breadfruit, carambola, jackfruit, rambutan (below) and mangosteen
- Bring a little flower colour to the garden by planting seedlings of salvia, zinnia and coleus
- Treat powdery mildew with a registered organic fungicide



These plants will help to keep bees in your area healthy and happy this autumn and winter.

- banana (Musa spp.)
- caram<u>bol</u>a
- (Averrhoa carambola)
- citrus (Citrus spp.) gundabluie
- (Acacia victoriae) hairpin banksia (Banksia spinulosa)
- lemon balm (Melissa officinalis)
- macadamia (Macadamia spp.)

- magenta stork's-bill (Pelargonium rodneyanum)
- moonah
- (Melaleuca lanceolata) native hibiscus (Alyogyne huegelii)
- nemesia (Nemesia spp.)
- oregano (Origanum spp.)
- passionfruit (Passiflora edulis)
- red cap gum (Eucalyptus erythrocorys)





As his spiky old friend, the echidna, nonchalantly waddles into his garden, LEONARD CRONIN shares some interesting facts about this monotreme

am captivated by a ball of spines lumbering through the garden, and very pleased to see an old friend doing its rounds. Echidnas are pretty fearless, but if threatened they curl up and freeze or bury themselves on the spot. This one ignores me, hones in on an ants' nest, and digs frantically with its powerful clawed forefeet. snuffling, snorting, pushing and probing with its long snout and sticky tongue, as it gobbles up a platoon of angry ants.

These slow-moving, solitary animals wander around during the day searching for tasty invertebrates to eat, and this is

where their amazingly sensitive snout is essential. Probing ants' nests, rotting logs and leaf litter, echidnas not only sniff out their prey, but can detect the tiny electrical signals emitted by their unsuspecting prey's muscles.

Echidnas share this extra sense with the platypus, the only other surviving monotreme. With a lineage that extends back to the age of the dinosaurs, some 120 million years ago, monotremes are thought to be the first of the mammals. Like the reptiles that preceded them, monotremes lay soft-shelled eggs but, unlike reptiles, they lay their eggs

directly into a pouch and nurture their newborn with milk that oozes from pores on the mother's belly. The echidna is, in fact, named after the half-woman, half-reptilian Greek goddess Ekhidna.

I hadn't seen this particular visitor for a long time. With a home range covering more than 50ha, this is hardly surprising, and in winter they become torpid to save energy, or hibernate for months in alpine areas. Dogs and cars continue to take their toll on our wildlife. so I'm very happy to see this one back again, especially when it's tucking into a nest of vicious bull ants.

Len gardens in the Northern Rivers, New South Wales







Naturalist MARTYN ROBINSON joins us in this new column to look at some of the little critters in our garden

eople sometimes think they have leeches in the garden, and worry that they or their pets will get bitten. However, not all leech-like animals actually are leeches and some are good guys you'd want to keep! Does the creature you've spotted crawl in a smooth, flowing motion like a slug, or an extend-and-retract action like a 'looper' caterpillar? If you said "more like the former", you can discount a leech entirely, as this is most likely a land planarian.

The most common garden species, Geoplana coerulea, is navy blue with a cream stripe on the back (pictured, below), bright blue on the underside (above) and sporting a pink tip on the 'head end'. They're strange animals, these, as they have a combined mouth and anus (yes, everything enters and leaves the body by the same opening!) which is located closer to the tail end. Unlike earthworms, these worms can truly regenerate whole new animals from fragments of themselves. In fact, some have never been known to lay eggs but always fragment to reproduce.

Are land planarians harmful? Mostly, no. All are predators, and the blue one I mentioned is one of the few animals that eat millipedes, including the Portuguese millipede (an invasive pest). The super slimy planarian worms trap and drown them in slime, then feast on the soft internal parts. Some land planarians are earthworm eaters, however, and some have caused damage when they accidentally ended up where they were not native and

started eating all the local earthworms - luckily, we seem to have no such problems here, or not yet! However, going back to the earlier question: what happens if the animal you found has an extend-and-retract action like a 'looper' or 'inch-worm' caterpillar? Well then it probably IS a leech - and that's a different story!



Martyn gardens mainly on Sydney's Northern Beaches



Have you found something interesting in your garden? Send us a photo and Martyn will ID it. Email yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au with 'Creature' in the subject line.



cat chat

Which cat owner hasn't thought at some time, "If only they could talk!" Cats do share their feelings with us, but in their own way, writes DR PETER KIRKPATRICK

hen a cat stares at her empty dish, then up at you, then back at the dish, it isn't hard to work out what she's saying. However, a lot of cat communication is rather subtle and difficult to decipher and, when they want to (for instance, when they are in pain), they are masters at hiding how they feel. Here are some of the messages we understand so far.

I love vou

Purring is associated with love and affection, and it's a strong signal that your cat is trying to let you know she cares for you. Other not-so-obvious signs are when she 'claims' you as hers by rubbing against you and leaving her smell, bumping against your leg or hand, or licking you. She may also show love and trust by making long eye contact with you, and slowly blinking her eyes. In cat speak, closing eyes in the presence of another is the ultimate sign of trust.

I'm happy

Every cat has a different way of saying they're content. Common signals are kneading of the paws, and tail signals. A slowly waving tail, straight tail or slightly bent, twitching tail can indicate a happy cat. A cat who is content is also trusting. She may roll onto her back and expose her belly, which only comes naturally when cats don't feel threatened. Verbally, many cats sound like a little motor purring along.

I want food

Many owners relate to persistent meowing associated with food. It's different to "Hi, I'm here" or "Give me a pat" - this is loud, demanding, commanding and only appeased by... food! It's often combined with entwining themselves with your legs or other attention-seeking behaviour.

Where's the water?

Cats are very intelligent and quickly realise that places such as the kitchen sink or shower offer a constant supply of fresh water. Many owners catch their cat lapping up the shower water, or licking at a dripping tap. Regularly freshen their water bowl or you might find them sharing your glass!

did you know?

The loudest purr of a domestic cat, belonging to Merlin from Torquay in the UK, measured in at 67.8 decibels. That's about the same as a vacuum cleaner!



What's in a purr?

A cat's purr is an amazing thing and differs from cat to cat. Some can be loud, some can be quiet. Some may constantly be purring while others may only purr on the most special of occasions. Cats have also been known to purr while they are giving birth, as it acts as a calming mechanism!

I'm scared or angry

A scared or aggressive cat shows different body language to a relaxed cat. If she is not comfortable with a situation, she will have flattened ears and dilated pupils, and may flick the end of her tail backward and forward, or hold it low to the ground. An arched back indicates imminent aggression, as does a bottlebrush-looking tail.

A stressed cat shows subtle signs, such as looking for a place to hide, slightly flattened ears, dilated pupils and behavioural changes (especially eating and toileting habits). A common cause is seeing another cat in their territory. You may notice the bottlebrush tail, strange high-pitched small meows, or big booming yowls. Try to comfort and soothe her, so she knows that she's safe.

I'm in pain or discomfort

Cats are very stoic and will not often show obvious signs of pain, however they feel pain just as we do. It is important to learn your cat's normal, relaxed body language and communication, so you can recognise signs of stress, pain or discomfort early. Here are some signs to be aware of:

- Licking of the lips can indicate nausea or stress
- Increased vocalisation
- Panting or open-mouthed breathing (this is an emergency)
- Change in mobility, especially not being able to jump
- Lack of appetite
- Change in litter-box habits
- Uncomfortable-looking resting body position
- Squinting or the appearance of a third eyelid

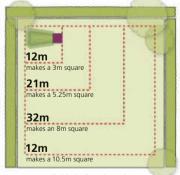
Arthritis is a common and increasingly painful ailment of an ageing cat. The signs can be subtle at first, so look out for any slowly changing body language or behaviour.

Every cat is individual in her language, and will use her own combination of verbalisation, traits and body language. Learn your cat's language so you can respond accordingly, and you will have a happy human-pet bond for life! GA



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letterbox

Readers share gardening experiences, top tips and photos. Enter our competition to win a stylish hat for the garden, too!





annually, which is equivalent to Canberra's population!



who is our facebook fan of the month? MARIA LOURAN posted this photo on our page, of her nephew and the 102 tomatoes they harvested in one day! There's plenty of delicious eating ahead!

late bloomer

When I moved to Tasmania, I was sad to leave my red hippeastrum behind. Then, at my Gardening Club's Christmas party, I was given a pot plant with a tight, pinkish bud. It turned out to be a red hippeastrum! It now has three



stems with lots of brillliant-red trumpets. I feel blessed, as different gifts were received at the party, and hippies come in many colours.

J Tahir, Deloraine, Tas



kindred spirits

Thanks Phil. Your 'Lazy Sod' article in February's edition reassured me that I'm not bludging in summer when I go to the beach instead of hankering down in the garden. I love my patch, but the heat sends me indoors to catch up on reading. If I venture out, it's to do a guick lap, position my hose over the vegies (your No. 9), and I may do a quick snip and drop (No. 4), replace the yellow stick traps and fruit-fly bait (No. 5), then get quickly back inside to find out whodunnit in my latest novel. Keep up the good work, or not. Autumn's not far away!

S Hinchey, Warriewood, NSW

aoina Dutch

Mave just bought myself a Dutch hoe. I could not be more delighted. As you say, you barely get your hands dirty. I went straight into the yard to try it out and managed to weed the whole front yard in about 15 minutes, while still wearing my good clothes. It works like a dream. I am extremely pleased to have found this tool so early in my gardening experience. Thank you very much, I look forward to more tips.

K Stefanovic, aka The Novice Gardener, via email



ioin us on Ínstagram!

Strawflowers have starred on our Instagram





feed lately. Here, we see @dragonflysprings' golden everlasting (left) taking on @inbloomaustralia's pink rhodanthe (right). What incredible and vibrant shots! Tag #gardeningaustraliamag to share your own garden colour or simply follow @gardeningaustraliamag to see lots more lovely images.



Don't Just Water Your Garden!

✓ Safe on your whole garden including natives ✓ Promotes health and growth in all plants



It was a joy to see the wonderful photograph of a tawny frogmouth in the February issue of Gardening Australia magazine. Over the years, our native garden has been home to many tawny frogmouths and their young. One year, we watched as an adult bird guarded a tiny. fluffy white chick that had fallen from a nest in a storm. We named her Flossie. For three days and nights, the adult remained on a low branch just centimetres from the ground where Flossie huddled.

Fearing for her safety (plenty of foxes and cats about), and with advice from a professional, we made a 'nest' from a hanging basket, and hung Flossie from a safe branch. Within minutes, the adult bird settled close by to feed and watch over the little one. Then, early on the fourth day, we discovered Flossie's nest was empty, and the parent had disappeared, along with the rest of the frogmouth family (there were two adults and three chicks). Hours later, I found Flossie cowering under a shrub. She was so tiny she could barely stand, and fitted into the palm of my hand. After a few phone calls, Flossie was tucked into a warm box and taken to Melbourne Zoo, where we like to think she made a strong recovery and was released into the wild.

Here is a photo of one of the frogmouth families that have resided in our garden. They disguise themselves perfectly and, even when we find them, they are often in a place that is hard to photograph. Thank you for Leonard Cronin's article and that gorgeous photo!

J Caine, Donvale, Vic





got you covered

A practical and stylish hat for women working in the garden, Green Hip's lightweight Broad Rim Hat was indeed designed by a female gardener. These one-size-fits-all hats include a wire rim, drawstring and ventilation holes. For more information visit greenhip.com.au

We have 8 Broad Rim Hats in charcoal colour to give away (worth \$35 each). To enter, tell us in 25 words or less: What's your most essential garden apparel when working in the garden? Write your name, address, contact number and entry on the back of an envelope and send to Green Hip Hats, Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590 or email comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au, with 'Green Hip Hats' in the subject line, by March 13.



Post your photos on Facebook at facebook.com/ **ABCGardening** Australiamagazine

Got a great gardening tip or photo? Share it with us! Email us at yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au or write to Your Say, Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590. Please note, letters may be edited for space and clarity, and photos may be posted on our Facebook page.

Seasol Your Garden!

✓ Enhances flowering & fruiting ✓ Great to use all year round



great shot!

Our theme for Your Photos in our January issue was 'Hot stuff'. Check out the winner, and some finalists that got pretty warm, too! Enter this month to win a great tree package

















- I I love the strong, brassy colours of these Asiatic lilies. They'd brighten anyone's day. J Howlett, Bellbrook, NSW
- 2 This red flowering gum is the centrepiece of my native garden every summer. L Henderson,

Eden, NSW

- **3** This chilli patch caught my eye in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris last year. **J Bott, Northam, WA**
- **4** This is Bobby, Tiger and Ruby cooling off in the dam after a hot summer's day. **C Hastings, Chintin, VIC**
- **5** I took this photo of two fiery red-hot pokers (*Kniphofia* spp.) blazing on a summer's day in my garden last December. **J Mellor, Young, NSW**

This month's theme is birds and bees

Email your best photo to us with 'Birds and bees' in the subject line, to comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au and include your name, address and contact number. Photos must be garden-related and high-resolution. The best entries will be published in the May issue, and the photo of the month will win a Magic Fleming's Fruit and Ornamental Package, consisting of:

4 x various Trixzie[™] miniature fruit trees 4 x various Magic Series[™] semi-dwarf crepe myrtle 1 x Fleming's *Fruit and Ornamental Tree Guide*

Competition starts 15/2/16, 00:01 AEDT and closes 13/3/16, 23:59 AEDT. Winners are judged 15/3/16 at 14:00 AEDT. Total prize is valued at \$500.



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ask our experts

Our gardening experts identify an orchid and advise on crops for chooks, killing weeds and why trees won't flower

chook crops

My four chooks have access to a 50m x 5m run. I would like to close off a third of it to grow feed for them, then allow them access. What crop would be best? S Thomas, Brisbane, Qld

Any of the 'greens' would be great, such as silverbeet or amaranth. Grow grain amaranth as they can eat its leaves but will also love the big, coloured seed heads (right). Add some maize, which will give you a far bigger crop for your area than sweetcorn. Perhaps a few sunflowers, too, so you can enjoy the flowers and the chooks can have the seed heads later. You'll find a great seed mix for chooks called Clucker Tucker at greenharvest.com.au

Jackie French



Dipel puzzle

How can Dipel kill 'bad' bugs but not 'good' bugs? How does this work?

M Goldstiver, Gosford, NSW

Dipel is a natural bacteria (Bacillus thuringiensis) that is poisonous to butterflies and moth larvae. Applied to the entire leaf, it is ingested by caterpillars, which die up to four days later. Other beneficial insects, such as ladybirds and bees, are safe from its fatal effects, but the gardener needs to decide: is a little bit of leaf damage worth it to enjoy the butterflies that follow the caterpillar stage – or is the infestation so bad, an application of Dipel is worthwhile?

Ally Jackson

stubborn weed

I won't use chemicals, but this weed is doing my head in. It has very deep roots, sends out side shoots from the root and spreads when you pull it out! Do you know what it is, and is there a natural way of beating it?

S Newman, Wingham, NSW





This is nutgrass. It's tricky to control because of the spreading bulb. You will need to dig it out, or smother it with 1cm of wet newspaper then cover with 5-7cm of mulch. To speed up decomposition, lay blood and bone or pelletised chook manure under the newspaper. This is called sheet mulching.

Josh Byrne



Ask us on Facebook at facebook.com/ ABCGardening Australiamagazine

Email questions to experts@gardeningaustralia.com.au or write to Experts, Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590. Please include your full name, suburb and state. Questions may be edited, and questions and photos may be posted on our Facebook page. Emailed photos must be high resolution. There is no personal reply service for unpublished questions.



mystery orchid

I bought this orchid label-less at my local nursery. Could you please identify it? How should I re-pot it? Y Tait, Heidelberg West, Vic

The true and correct name of this orchid is *Colmanara samurai* but it is also known as Odontocidium samurai or Odontonia samurai. This is what's known as a temperate-growing orchid. It loves moderate light, water, fertilisers and a good open orchid blend of potting mix, as well as comfortable temperatures of 8-32°C. Divide your orchid into 4-6 bulb pieces before re-potting in mid to late spring.

Wayne Turville, Australian Orchid Nursery



why no flowers?

I have four pleached blueberry ash trees that haven't flowered or produced fruit for 4–5 years. Do they only flower when in distress? T Whitton Dela Cruz. Cumbalum, NSW

Flowering in woody plants is a complex subject, and there are often no simple answers as to what makes them flower and fruit. Stressful conditions are often. but not always, associated with lack of flowering. On the other hand, conditions that cause vigorous vegetative growth are certainly going to inhibit flowering and fruiting, and I'm thinking that the pleaching process, where you are regularly needing to prune the plant, would be stimulating vegetative growth at the expense of reproductive growth in your blueberry ash trees.

Angus Stewart



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take a break!

Put on the kettle - it's time to relax. Solve our puzzle to be in the running to win a pair of Fiskars 365 pruners









across

SOLUTION NEXT MONTH

- 1. Tree of the genus Fagus (5)
- 4. Stone often used in architecture (6)
- 7. Polynesian shrub yielding an intoxicating drink (4)
- 10. Botanical garden devoted to trees (9)
- 11. Large, floating leaf (4.3)
- 13. Once more than twice (6)
- 14. Plant on which the seed pods burst open when disturbed (5-2-3)
- 15. Magazine supplement (6)
- 16. Fallow (6)
- 18. Inhabitants of New Zealand (5)
- 20. Cruciferous plant with pungent, edible leaves (5)
- 21. Hard animal fat (6)
- 22. Decongest (6)

- 25. Tough-rooted plant of the genus Ononis (10) (PICTURE A)
- 27. Eagerly (6)
- **29.** What garden hay is to hydrangea (7)
- **30.** 1976 Barbra Streisand hit (9)
- 32. African tree bearing nuts that yield butter-like fat (4)
- 33. Spring, for example (6)
- **34.** Murky, cloudy (5)

down

- 1. Constrictor snake (3)
- 2. Goes aboard (7)
- 3. Another common name for the white-flowered baneberry. Actaea spicata (4,11) (PICTURE B)
- 4. Tiny arachnid (4)

- 5. Broad-leafed garlic (6)
- **6.** Light purple (5)
- 8. Rhododendron that grows at high altitudes (9) (PICTURE C)
- 9. Official examination (5)
- 12. Queensland tree, Eucalyptus citriodora (5-7.3)
- **13.** Dense mass of trees or shrubs (7)
- 17. Bunch of fragrant flowers (7)
- 19. Aconitum lycoctonum or ... (5,4)
- 23. Oil used in paint and varnish (7)
- 24. They groom lawns, etc (6)
- 25. Cuts or gathers (a crop) (5)
- 26. Nettle that yields fibre used in weaving (5)
- 28. Flowerless plant with fronds (4)
- 31. Negative vote (3)

WIN





get into gear

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how to enter

To win a Fiskars 365 pruner, unscramble the highlighted letters in the crossword (opposite) and email your answer by March 13 to comp@gardeningaustralia. com.au with 'Pruners' in the subject line. Include your name, address and daytime contact number.

WINNERS

Gardena hose boxes (December 2015)

E Donato, Ringwood, Vic; J Larwood, Willetton, WA; S Svenson, Sippy Downs, Qld

Holman mobile greenwall kits (December 2015)

N Ciccio, Ashfield, NSW; E Luther, Prairie, Qld; A Sayyadi, Lane Cove, NSW

February's unscrambled word: germinate

solution

February 2016 crossword

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Watch Gardening Australia on ABC TV each Saturday from 6.30pm. The show is repeated on Sunday at 1pm.

March S

In our first episode of Gardening Australia for 2016, we are doing what we do best, showing you lots of beautiful gardens and stacks of practical gardening ideas. Tino Carnevale is planting cabbages, broccoli and Asian greens at The Patch, Josh Byrne checks out the stunning wildflower displays at Kings Park Botanic Garden, Costa Georgiadis explores a unique garden with an iconic Sydney Harbour backdrop and Jane Edmanson looks at easy-to-grow herbal tea plants.

March 12

Costa Georgiadis visits horticultural legend Ben Swane for some great gardening tips, Angus Stewart has helpful advice on gardening with clay soils, Sophie Thomson has everything you need to know about growing citrus in pots, Jane Edmanson meets an inventive gardener with a flair for colour and quirk, and John Patrick talks garden design ideas.



For details of programs on your local ABC station, call 139 994 or visit abc.net.au/local

ACT

666 ABC Canberra Saturday 8.30-10am

NSW

92.5 ABC Central Coast Saturday 9-9.30am ABC Mid North Coast Wednesday 10.30-11am, Saturday 9.30-10am 1233 ABC Newcastle Saturday 9-9.30am

ABC New England North West

Thursday 9.30am, Saturday 8.30am

ABC North Coast Saturday 8.30-9.30am

ABC Riverina

Wednesday 10.30-11am, Saturday 8.30-9am

ABC South East

Wednesday 10.05-10.30am, Saturday 9.05-10am

702 ABC Sydney

Saturday 9-9.30am

ABC Western Plains

Thursday 9.35am fortnightly, Saturday 8.30-9am

NT

783 ABC Alice Springs; 106.1 ABC Tennant Creek Saturday 8.30-9am 105.7 ABC Darwin Saturday 9-9.30am

QLD

612 ABC Brisbane Saturday 6-7am ABC Capricornia; 630 ABC North Old; ABC North West Qld; ABC Tropical North; ABC Western Qld; **ABC Wide Bay** Friday 10-11am 91.7 ABC Gold Coast;

ABC Southern Old

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ABC Far North

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Statewide Sunday 10.30am 891 ABC Adelaide; 1485 ABC Evre Peninsula & West Coast: 639 ABC North & West: **ABC South East** Saturday 8.30am 999 ABC Broken Hill: 1062 ABC Riverland Saturday 9am

TAS

936 ABC Hobart: **ABC Northern** Tasmania Saturday 9-10am

VIC

774 ABC Melbourne; Local Radio Victoria Saturday 9.30am ABC Ballarat Wednesday 6.40am

monthly, Thursday 10am fortnightly

1602 ABC South West Victoria

Thursday 7.20am fortnightly

ABC Central Victoria

Thursday 7.35am fortnightly Alternate Thursday 10-10.30am fortnightly

594 ABC Western Victoria

Tuesday 9.10am

ABC Mildura Swan Hill

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ABC Gippsland Monday 10-10.30am

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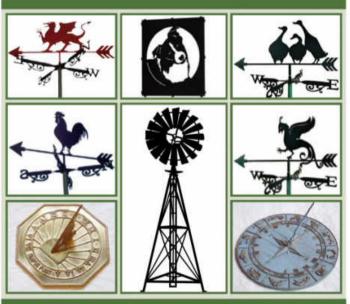
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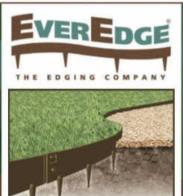
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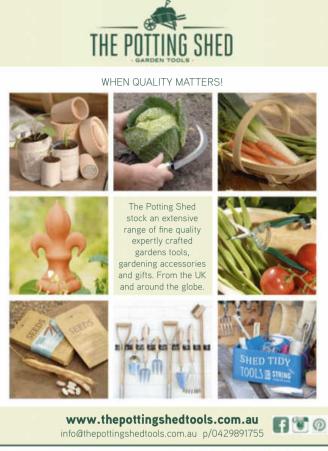
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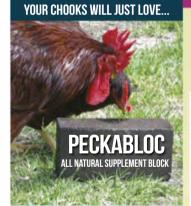




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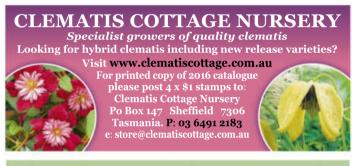


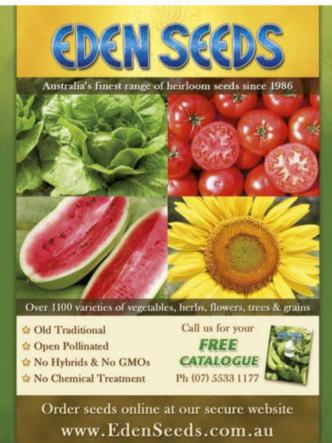
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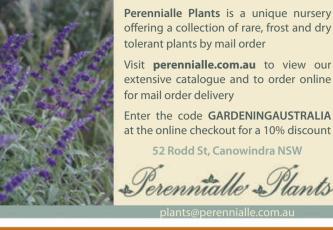




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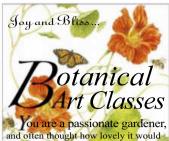
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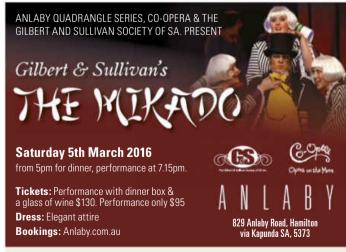


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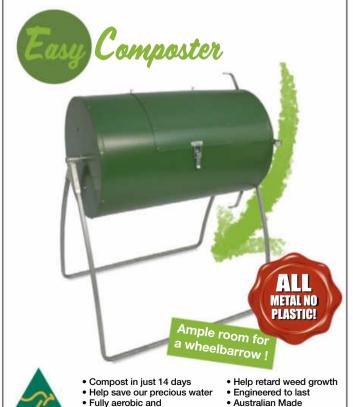
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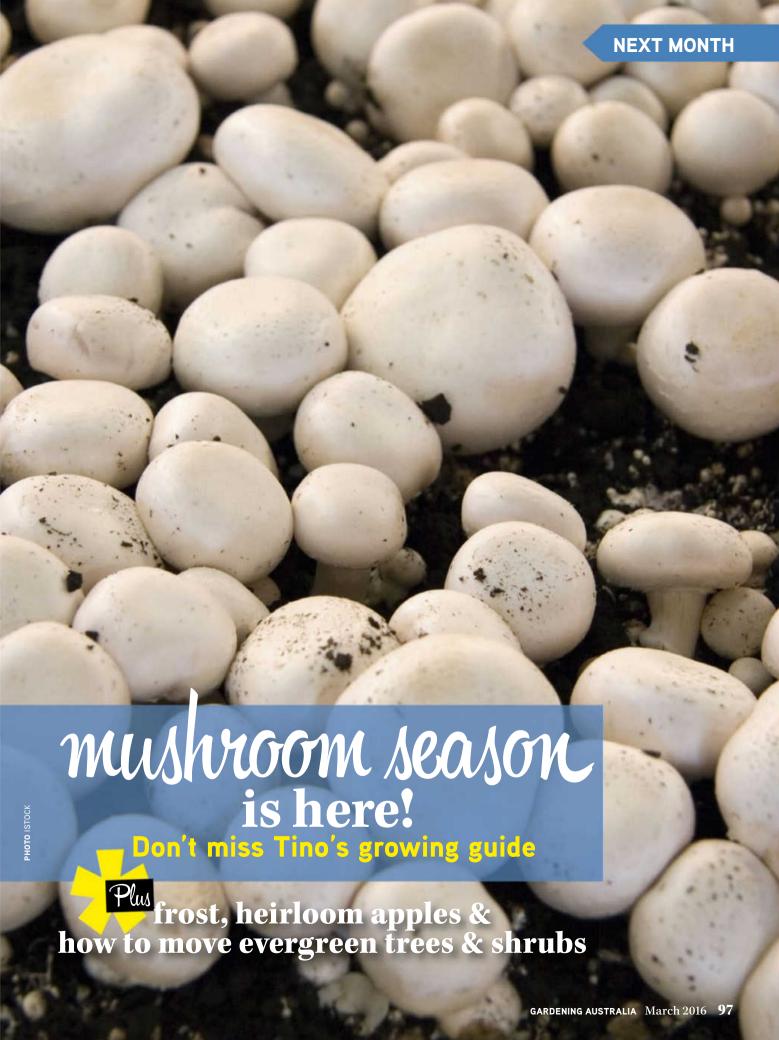
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the big picture

not just a pretty fac

You need to inhale as well as look to really appreciate a plant's dazzling beauty, writes MICHAEL McCOY.

o you suffer from the terrible blight of being so stunningly beautiful that everyone assumes you must be stupid? I'm glad to say that I don't. Not that I'm never considered stupid - it's just my looks that are never the source of the assumption.

But I reckon I detect a similarly one-dimensional approach when we're checking out plants. And the more overt or extreme the primary appeal of any plant is, the less likely we'll look, or smell, for any further layers of pleasure.

A perfect case-in-point is the ubiquitous petunia. It's an entry-level annual, being blindingly showy and phenomenally generous in bloom, as well as

think why this is never, ever mentioned in relation to this plant, which is grown for autumn foliage.

A couple of roses are known for their scent alone. Not for the obvious perfume of their flowers, but the young foliage. I have an inner ache for Rosa primula - the incense rose. I grew it about 20 years ago, but haven't a clue where to get it now. The young leaves, on a dewy, perfume-distilling morning, are deliciously scented, apparently of ecclesiastical incense, if you know what that smells like.

"The scent is strongest in the evening, when it oozes through the garden like heavy treacle"

virtually foolproof to grow. But it's so showy that we totally overlook the fact that it is also scented, and in many cases very heavily so. My experience would suggest that the richer the colour, the richer the scent, with the deep purples being best of all. Their scent is strongest in the evening, at which time the perfume oozes through the garden like heavy treacle. It's curious that the perfume of the petunia is hardly mentioned in the literature.

I have an ornamental grape draped over part of my verandah, and the scent of its bloom in mid-November is as good as any other. I can't

And then there's the sweet briar, Rosa rubiginosa. It's an appalling weed in south-eastern Australia, but whenever I'm near one, I can't help but have a good, long olfactory draft of its apple-scented foliage.

There was a time when I could identify all the species of magnolia in a garden in which I worked by the spicy smell of their damaged roots, as I planted around them. You'd never grow them for this reason, but I was grateful for the side-benefit.

The joys of plants and gardens are multi-faceted. and the more I access, the richer my pleasure. GA

Michael blogs at thegardenist.com.au

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